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Thoughts on Religion and Morality

James Eddy

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Rev. SAMUEL LONGFELLOW,

of Cambridge.

2 November 1893.

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THOUGHTS

ON

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, HIS CHARACTER AND RELATIONS TO HUMANITY: RELIGIOUS DUTIES GROWING OUT OF HUMAN RELATIONS WITH GOD: MORALITY AND OUR RELATIONS WITH EACH OTHER.

BEING CONVICTIONS, PRINCIPLES AND DUTIES WHICH THE AUTHOR DESIRES, IN SO FAR AS IS CONSISTENT WITH FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION, SHOULD BE INCULCATED AT THE BELL STREET CHAPEL, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

JAMES EDDY.

PROVIDENCE, R. I.:
1891.

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2 Nov. 1893

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Rev. S. LONGFELLOW. 83

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"I seek after truth, by which no man ever yet was injured."

"Let us adore that Divine Sun from Whom flow rays of Light and Joy: from Whom all do proceed, in Whom all live anew, to Whom all must return. May He rule our thoughts aspiring to His Sacred Heart."

"God of the granite and the rose!
Soul of the sparrow and the bee!
The mighty tide of being flows
Through countless channels, Lord, from Thee.
It leaps to life in grass and flowers;
Through every grade of Being runs,
Till from Creation's radiant towers
Its glory flames in Stars and Suns."

"O Thou whose love is changeless, both now and evermore:
Source of all conscious being, Thy goodness I adore.
Lord, I would ever praise Thee, for all Thy love can give,
But most of all, O Father, I thank Thee that I live."

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DEDICATION.

Believing it to be a duty to make known and dedicate to humanity all of our honest thought which we consider would advance, even in a slight degree, the well-being of mankind, I so dedicate this little volume of guiding principles in religion and morality. My first feeling in this dedication of what are to me the best and highest thoughts upon God and our relations to Him, is naturally towards my own children, to whom our Divine Father has tied my heart with cords of love and affection.

And after them sweet memories of my deceased parents flit through my mind; those parents who were the honored agents of God in giving me life, and who never betrayed the trust reposed in them, but gave to their children honestly and earnestly the best education in religious and moral truth which they were fitted at that time to impart: as, with equal sincerity and earnestness, their son presents in this book, which he dedicates to their memory, his own best knowledge of our relations with God and with each other. I feel a desire also

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to dedicate my thoughts as expressed in these pages to my family kindred, and to all my friends and acquaintances by whom I have had the advantage to be known.

I dedicate this little volume also to the charitable consideration of all moral and religious teachers, and to all thoughtful people throughout the world, feeling satisfaction in the hope that a few readers may find herein some kernels of truth to add to their own earnest and honest convictions in regard to our highest duties.

And lastly, using the freedom with which I feel myself to be endowed, I would reverently, gratefully, lovingly, with all honor, dedicate my honest thought to our Divine Father who in His noble disinterestedness, asks from us no homage, no sacrifice for Himself, but only desires the well-being of all His creatures!

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

This volume has been selected and compiled from a large and wholly unarranged mass of manuscript writings left by Mr. James Eddy. Great care has been taken to keep as far as possible both the thought and wording of the Author: but the order and some of the phrasing of the book have been necessarily the contribution of the Editor, in the interest of clearness and good form.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

AND

PREFATORY NOTES.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

—AND—

PREFATORY NOTES.

Born in 1806, I am now an old man, the eleventh of twelve children. My parents have long since passed away, and I, in my eighty-second year, am the only remaining child of their union.

I loved my Mother; what she instilled into my mind as the truth I accepted as such; and all she taught, and all James Wilson our Minister taught from the pulpit, was endorsed by my Father; and being a susceptible child what is called religious truth was deeply impressed on my mind.

My parents were poor, industrious, honest and respectable. For sixty years of their long lives they were members of the Congregational Church in Providence. They were sincere and full of Christian faith, and taught me to believe as they did. So that in a sense I was born an Orthodox Christian boy, and for many years I was as true as steel, as a child ought to be when taught by loving parents, to the tenets and principles of religion held by them. Later on in youth I began to think for myself in matters of religion; and continued reflection gradually modified these inherited views essentially.

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My mind has especially dwelt upon religious subjects during the latter part of my life, and now that I am "living upon borrowed time," I feel a great desire before leaving this world to present to others some of my ideas upon Religion and Morality.

It is not so important to my mind that my views be accepted, as that I should conscientiously perform my duty in presenting them to my fellow creatures. For however small our taper of light may be, we are not justified in hiding it; and believing sincerely that my convictions are true, I feel I should share them with others.

I believe that if the ideas of Religion which fill my mind were generally adopted, old things would pass away, and a new earth and a new conception of Heaven upon this earth, would be created.

Old age is proverbially garrulous, and I now like to talk as a brook likes to flow: but soon the ocean of Eternity will swallow me up, and before I vanish I would like to aid in establishing a more reasonable religious faith than that which now prevails. Not having received what is termed a liberal education, I find myself unable to express in the forcible language which their importance demands, many ideas which flit through my mind. But I feel it a duty to do the best I can. I have much on my mind other than the subjects on which I feel I ought to write, so that I fear I shall not succeed in setting down even in my poor way all that I desire to say; since only those who have arrived at my time of life can comprehend the positive inability of old age to perform the mental and phys-

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ical labor which younger persons can so well do, especially when their education permits them to easily express their thoughts. When one has arrived at the sunset period of life, how natural it is for him to drop into his rocking chair to reflect and to doze away the time; and if his own failing eyes forbid their use, to be blessed in finding a kind daughter or friend to read to him the morning paper.

In old age there is perhaps no literature more interesting than the daily news from the outside world. The old man lives on recollections of the past, and having outgrown activity and become rich in experience, his interest in the world is kept alive by the events of the hour.

I realize painfully my own disposition to procrastinate in the task of writing out my views upon Religion and Morals.

My parents each lived to the age of eighty-two, and as I am past eighty I am not justified in expecting to live much longer in good health. And with so little time in prospect I am dismayed to see that I fail to achieve what my reason and conscience constantly urge me to do in this matter. Should I never accomplish the work I have so much at heart, it will serve as a warning to others to work in the fulness of their strength, while the sun shines, and not wait until clutched by the spirit of procrastination which rapidly eats up the little balance of time and strength allowed to an old man.

Inspired by moral and religious sentiments several years since, I built a church or chapel in Bell Street near my own residence. I was especially influenced to do this by attending for several years previous, the meetings in Providence of the

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so-called "Free Religious Society." These meetings were addressed by such men as Wm. J. Potter, Mr. Wasson, Sam. Johnson, F. E. Abbot, A. B. Alcott, B. F. Underwood, John Weiss, William C. Gannett and others. These speakers were all eminent as honest independent thinkers. They all gave us of their best thoughts, and they are all sincere and intelligent men, and I shall always remember them with respect and gratitude. As most of these speakers came from out of the city, I often enjoyed the privilege of entertaining them at my home. This gave me a chance of becoming personally acquainted with many of them, and their acquaintance I shall always value.

Although thus prizing the lectures and the meetings of the Free Religious Society, I could never join the Association, since to my view, it was not based upon sufficiently definite principles to be truly entitled to the name "Religious." I have for years believed that the time has now come to lay the foundations of a new religion materially modified from all existing systems of popular faith. I believe that as the human mind matures by the exercise of reflection, and through collective experience, the inevitable changes which result in our religious convictions should be embodied in religious organizations, whose creeds, or codified statements of guiding principles, harmonize with other forms of mental evolution.

I believe that each and all have the right to exercise freedom in expressing, by speech and in writing, their convictions of Truth and Duty: and using that freedom, since there are various definitions and notions in regard to the meaning of the

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words Religion and Morality, I will begin by defining the meaning which I attach to them, and to which all my reasonings will be adjusted.

RELIGION.

Religion is the performance of all duties growing out of our relations with God.

MORALITY.

Morality is the performance of all duties growing out of our relations with our fellow-men and all other creatures.

To have relations with a power higher than man presupposes the existence of that power. And to my mind the assumption of a wise and good God lies at the foundation of all Religion, and a religious society must therefore be openly based upon the acknowledgment of the existence and beneficent character of a Power above the human.

The reader will I hope realize, that when I affirm thus decidedly some law of Truth I affirm nothing but my own individual convictions concerning that truth or principle, and unless I was prepared to give some evidence of the soundness of my convictions in order to justify their existence, my affirmations would indicate dogmatism, which I ought to condemn in myself as in others. Exercise your own intelligence, respected Reader, in regard to my statements. If my positions are not your own, and you choose to criticise them, it appertains to your liberty to do so, if done fairly to the end of ascertaining the truth; and my first words to you are, if you have not of

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your own free will exercised your own mind in honest thought and reflection upon religious subjects, do so now! Take little or nothing for truth which has not passed through the alembic of your own mind. Examine, reflect and decide for yourself in these important matters. As St. Paul said: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

If I appear egotistic in the use of the pronoun "I", my excuse must be that I know of no one who believes exactly as I do in religious matters, so that it is just and proper for me to bear alone whatever odium or condemnation may attach to the promulgation of my views. I entertain the hope, however, that the views I herein express may some time be accepted by others, to some extent at least. I only propose modifications of the popular faith, such modifications as I sincerely believe would, if adopted and taught, honor God more than most Christians now honor him, and dignify humanity to a degree not yet reached in the world.

For my honest and plain utterances I am entitled to little or no credit; for circumstances have placed me above cowardice in this respect. Many a poor minister, on the other hand, with a lean bank account, with a family to support, and wholly dependent upon the favor of the public, has evolved himself by honest reflection into beliefs which he dares not teach his congregation. Such men are entitled to sympathy from those who, now more out-spoken, might in similar circumstances fail equally in sincerity of utterance. Yet all those who do fail in sincerity must receive punishment in their own consciences. An honest man is the noblest work of *him-*

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self; for God never made a man honest, since He never does for us what we can and ought to do for ourselves.

Of course, the old observation may apply to my little book which has been justly used in respect to others, "What is true is not new, and what is new is not true." But as all knowledge, all scientific truth, must be discovered and pass through the human mind, each and all of us are justified in exercising our individual faculties to the utmost if so inclined. And I have been, as it were, impelled to the presentation of my religious views.

I do not present my views as *final.* That I would not pretend to do, since our march toward the knowledge of all truth is continuously onward. Experience and profound reflection must lead mankind much farther before we can arrive at finalities in Religion or Morality.

I aspire to no leadership. I recommend to all an honest study of their relations with a higher Power, and wish all to be guided by their own convictions in these important concerns of life. A good conscience is made up of sincerity and an earnest seeking for truth with all the understanding one can command. And after reflecting and doing the best one can, the approving smile of God will be felt in a good conscience, even if the conclusions arrived at by the intellect be more or less erroneous.

To be religious as I understand it, is to ascertain by experience and careful study of the phenomena of nature the *character of God,* or the Powers above humanity; then to study ourselves and our relations to Him and to each other. Then

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come in our religious obligations, which consist of the conscientious performance of our duties in our relations with God and all duties in our relations with each other. To honestly perform all these duties is all that can be expected of us by any Power above us, and the sincere performance of all duty will enable us to be intelligent and good, which is the highest state of human enjoyment. Let us begin *now* the work of perfecting ourselves; for yesterday is gone from us and can only be useful to us by our memory of its experiences; to-morrow is not ours, and may never become so; to-day, this hour, is all we may call our own. And the duty of the hour is to know God and ourselves, and to resolve to perform our duties in all our relations with God and man.

I suggest it would be well for any old man to epitomize and leave to his fellows as a little legacy, what he might consider the most important conclusions and deductions of his mind on his relations to God and his fellow men, summed up through his own experiences of life. If each old man before quitting this world could leave a single truth or guiding principle not known or appreciated by the world, which would or should be accepted by it, how rapidly would truths and principles be multiplied; for the rich mines of truths and principles so far from being worked out, are hardly opened. Animated by this feeling I have resolved to write down some thoughts and convictions on the always interesting subjects of Religion and Morality, — the laws of nature, the character and will of high Divine Powers, other and higher than the power of will and freedom that man himself possesses. I propose to state

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my convictions on various matters, among them the important subjects of the Will and Liberty of Man, as exemplified in the facts and experiences of life; also my views of Immortality, or of continued individual consciousness after death. If there is any value of truth or newness in the modification of prevailing opinions which I propose, and which I have myself adopted, I have faith to believe that if fairly presented they will be received at least by a few, and sooner or later appreciated by a sufficient number to keep alive any seeds of new truth which my writings may contain. I am quite sincere in my own belief and expression of my convictions, and at the outset I desire in this respect to have your confidence; I have no personal interested motives in writing as I do, unless it be the great satisfaction I should feel in having my cherished views and principles adopted by others, for the reason that I have implicit faith that they are up to this time the best that have been presented to guide us. In regard to Religion, we find on glancing at the present condition of countries the most civilized and advanced in scientific research, that in respect to religious faith and creeds, hitherto held by the Orthodox Christian to be too sacred to justify an examination, a "change is slowly coming over the spirit of their dreams." The old religious creeds and beliefs of past centuries are being submitted to the examination of common-sense thinkers, who criticise them with a hardihood, wounding perhaps, to the susceptibilities of many Christians, who with fear and regret perceive that "Old things are gradually passing away and all things are becoming new." This progress, I think, is inevitable. The

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indications of change and dissolution of old ideas are plainly visible in our time. One modification of old accepted truth leads to another. I have placed on a panel of a door in Bell Street Chapel these words, "Many beliefs of to-day will become the heathenisms of the future." The same power of truth and reason that casts from the pedestal of our old faith a God that *demands* and *requires* of us to love, honor and serve Him on pain of punishment, will place a true God in the heart and mind of the intelligent and good. From our knowledge of the character of the most perfect specimens of human kind, it has become for many impossible to believe in the existence of a God with a character such as the Orthodox Christian creeds ascribe to him, since those creeds represent Him as inferior to our best men and women, in a moral point of view. Poor human nature requires a God that it can look up to, one who possesses intelligence and goodness *superior* to the best of men, not *inferior* in character to the average man! We need a God as a model of a good character for us to imitate in our humble way. Let us consecrate our church edifices and our own minds and hearts to a God whom we recognize as *above* our highest human standard, not *beneath* it; whom we can love and honor with our own free will; for this will enable us to consider the performance of our religious and moral duties the greatest privilege of life.

This planet is a vast ball, and man in growing intelligence and power is fitted and permitted to be its master! By whatsoever or by whomsoever created, man exists a Power in the Universe of conjoined mind and matter! Although subjected

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to general laws, not of his own creation, yet all must admit these laws are constituted in wisdom and are necessary to man, so much so that his very existence depends upon the unchangeableness and continuation of them! Within these natural laws man has the power of freedom and will, and God never abridges or interferes by what are called "Special Providences" with the naturally endowed freedom of man to create circumstances. Man in his constitution is the conception of a higher Power, and by his endowment of reason and liberty has the ability to ascertain his true relations with his fellow man, as also his relations with a power we may term "Divine Father." Thus man can govern himself, and acting within the natural laws he, by his freedom and will, governs the world! In regard to what we call Religion, no true God could arbitrarily demand of his creatures, homage, worship, or love. Man by the power of his liberty can voluntarily and freely love and honor what his reason, experience, and emotions teach him is worthy of his love and honor; but he cannot be forced to exercise these sentiments against his nature and his sincere convictions. The truth is, the wise and the good God who really exists, requires no man or woman to love and honor him, and no system of religion embodying the arbitrary requirements of homage and belief, is worthy to be presented for acceptance to any intelligent human being.

The true principle of entire freedom to worship or not to worship, as we may be impressed or inspired, appertains of right to the God-given liberty with which humanity is endowed, and comports with the true dignity of both God and man! This

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divine principle has not been recognized by most Christians; "Believe or you will be damned," has been the spirit of dogmatic Christianity!

If a person doubts, or cannot perceive or conceive, the existence of a higher Power than Man, is it sensible or just to mete out to him condemnation and punishment in this world in addition to the lessening of his own happiness to which his blindness subjects him? His want of perception is his misfortune, rather than his fault! If, seeing no visible God, he doubts or does not believe in the existence of a being that his senses do not acquaint him with, if he cannot mentally discern him, surely he is not to be punished any more than we would whip a horse for being born blind; and yet to punish an honest unbeliever, Agnostic or Atheist, has been considered good sound Christian doctrine! Honest heretics have been maimed and burned alive by honest Christians in power, for differing from them in points of belief and doctrine. And in violating their natural sentiments, who will say the Christians of the olden time were not honest and faithful to their consciences, and to the darkened light within them? We must believe in their honesty and fidelity to what they firmly believed to be the will of their God, and it must be true that they tearfully and reluctantly led the unbelieving heretics to be burned alive at the stake! What a terrible conflict must have been sustained between their natural humane sentiments and their stern determination to act in accordance with what was believed to be the eternal justice and the Will of God, as laid down in the Bible.

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Christians reasoned, that since heretics and unbelievers of every shade were doomed by God to eternal torment after death, their action in anticipating this punishment was co-operating with God in the furtherance of His Will, and as they sincerely believed, was in perfect harmony with God's character. Insincerity is vicious because it implies deceit, but sincerity itself has no special relation to either truth or error. Sincerity is the honest expression of beliefs and convictions, which may be either true or erroneous. Our forefathers cut off the ears of Quakers and hung witches; the Catholics burnt heretics, but we must suppose them to have been full of sincerity while performing these dreadful acts. Error of judgment, joined with a low anthropomorphic estimate of the character of God, caused these crimes. To act in accordance with honest convictions is not considered a crime, and yet great errors are the causes of great crimes! I will say now what I propose to emphasize in future statements, viz.: that God's smile of encouragement is not withheld in the consciences of those who sincerely act in accordance with their own best knowledge and belief, whatever that belief may be. We cannot rightfully condemn those who are sincerely and honestly true to their convictions, however erroneous they may be; notwithstanding which, we, individually and collectively, are largely responsible for the foundations on which we base our convictions. Sincerity and truth are the best foundation, and we ought earnestly to study to ascertain what is *Truth* and what is *Error*. We are of the opinion that our scientists and philosophers, in honestly searching for the truth, deserve

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to stand higher in the estimation of their fellow men, than do the Christian theologians, because the latter do not search for truth, they only profess to search the scriptures of the Bible, that "omnium gatherum" of truth and error. Change, progress, physical and mental, is a law of Nature, acting through time and experience; and the error of all who sustain the prevailing religions of our day is, that they oppose and fight against this divine law of progress and change; their efforts are retardative but not annihilating. Christians believe with more or less of sincerity that in their narrow creeds is concreted all the truth that it is necessary for man to know! It is worthy to note that Christians admit the divine principle of progress and increase of knowledge through experience in all things outside of religious creeds, but in our relations with God they insist that our knowledge is perfect. Thus they endeavor to shut off any further knowledge of what man on this earth should be most interested to know, the true character of God and our true relations with Him.

Christians admit in the abstract, that God is wise and good, and they meet in fine churches, no doubt with the honest intent to worship and honor Him; but inconsistently in fact by their Bible teachings, they libel and vilify their Maker, for the tendency of what they teach is to prove that God is *not* wise and good. They impugn the character and degrade the God whom they profess to worship, honor and love. Popular Christian idealizations of the character of God are the adopted conceptions of an ignorant and superstitious age!

Truth is simple, and any scientific truth when once discov-

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ered remains an undisputed fixed fact forever; not so what are called the Divine Christian revelations of God, which it is averred were revealed by God at the time of Christ, to a few persons selected to receive them. These so-called "revelations," are to us simply traditional hearsays of the early period of Christianity; unsupported in our day by continued breaking of divine law by miracles, which, if deemed necessary in the beginning to establish faith, should now be deemed necessary to keep that faith alive! These miracles never occurred, and had they occurred, the working of them would have proved nothing but simple Power, having no bearing on the truth or falsity of any system of Morality or Religion, which should rise or sink by its own intrinsic merit. Only by constant iteration and reiteration of the dogmas of the Christian system, has it ever been sustained. The indoctrination of children, and the unmanly fear of hell threatened to all unbelievers, have conspired to maintain its power.

All popular systems of religions which now prevail on the earth, were, like Christianity, founded in superstition and error; and in the Christian, as in other popular religious systems, some changes are absolutely necessary to fit it to our present conceptions of truth.

Under the influence of reason and reflection, here and there a sensible man has sown the seeds of doubt amid broad fields of a heavy growth of weeds of superstition and error. The honest Doubter creates the disposition to examine and investigate, and religious beliefs of various degrees of darkness are being submitted to this common sense examination. Brought

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to the sunlight of truth the prevailing pessimistic systems of Religion, as systems, must die away; and the question is, with what better system shall we replace them? If for instance we cannot replace the Christian system by something better, if we cannot find a God with a higher character than the sectarians present to us, the poor emancipated unbeliever must, I think, submit to be driven into the cold deserts of Agnosticism or Atheism, doubting or even disbelieving in the existence of any higher power than humanity, for us to worship.

Doubt and uncertainty seem, up to the present hour, to be the fate of those who with sorrow have forsaken the Churches, many of whom may be classed as honest Gropers after truth. They may join what are called Free Religious Associations, (without any religion) and seldom or never allude to any God or intelligent Power above the human, thus safely escaping the criticisms of both Orthodox and Atheist, by not describing a God concerning whose existence and character they cannot honestly pretend to know. The Free Religionists believe in fraternity, and the purest morality, and as a class lead most estimable lives, and the negations of those retiring from the churches and creeds of their fathers are in my opinion well put and well sustained. But what can be done to supplement these negations by something more positive? In matters appertaining to religion it is easier to detect error than to replace it by truth. Must reformation begin within the edifice of our fathers, or outside of the churches among doubters, free thinkers, Free Religionists, or advanced Unitarians? It seems to me that those just enumerated and others, have been for

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many years more occupied in freeing themselves from the trammels of superstition and error which sway our old churches, than in building up new systems of religion free from errors. I know of no religion in which the existence of a God is fully acknowledged, which replaces at all satisfactorily the old religions, which many intelligent men and women wholly, or in great part, condemn. Our learned men of science, our philosophers, our college professors, do little or nothing to solve the great problem of life. Is it indifference, or because they know nothing more of our true relations with God than is preached by our clergy? We do not look to the scientist for the highest expression or feeling of the religious sentiment; as a rule he seems to prefer to leave all idealistic and invisible matters to be dealt with within the churches. It does not necessarily appertain to the province of scientists to draw inferences and make deductions from their notation of facts; it seems to me their chosen province is to describe minutely and truthfully, the processes of Nature, as perceived by their senses, aided by good optical instruments. They are a modest, useful, and much to be respected class of our fellow men; all due praise and honor to them for their perseverance and research! Scientists testify before the world, like honest intelligent witnesses before a Court of Justice. These Court witnesses testify as a rule, only to what they have themselves seen, giving no opinions, and very properly leaving the judge and jury to draw their own inferences and make their own decisions. The scientists give us no God, they know of nothing invisible. Herbert Spencer however, who is considered to be, and I think justly,

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one of the most patient and intelligent scientists of our age, has discovered or believes in, what he calls a "Persistent Force." This for a thoroughbred scientist is an unusual and important admission. Persistent Force is a queer name to substitute for the common name of God, but it seems to indicate an approximation to a powerful Influence or Deity, I suppose the very best by way of compromise that Mr. Spencer can conscientiously give us, and remain true to his scientific convictions.

The terms Power and Force alone, do not indicate *character*, for force and energy may be exercised by a steam engine, or by a good or bad mental power. Some of the forces which we find existing in the world, which have been fairly persistent, can hardly be considered of themselves as indicating a high mental power of a transcendent character, for we find on looking back that error, crime, superstition and bad governments have to a certain extent been persistent forces ; also the belief in very bad Gods which still exists in the minds of the superstitious, who continue to make up so large a portion of the devotees of our prevailing religions.

Returning to the question, shall we attempt to found a new system of religion outside of the churches, or shall we depend upon the slow modifications for the better, which are now taking place within the old established religions? It may be urged by the honest believer who adheres to the existing churches, that if the negations and denyings of the truth of the points of belief of the Christian creeds are well put and well sustained, still the tearing down of the church of our fathers with all its errors, does not necessarily build us a new and a

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better one. The good Christian may say, "Before you attempt to blot from existence the Christian system of Religion, which surely is better than nothing, would it not be wiser to replace it by something *better*, would it not be more *modest* even?"

I believe there is much of truth and consequent strength in this line of argument by the honest existing upholders of the Christian system of theology. If the old house is rotten and dilapidated in parts, still there are pieces of sound timber in it, which may be worked to great advantage into a new and finer edifice. The old-time Christian may argue, "If the windows are small, and let in but little light, if the roof is leaky and the jibes and arguments of unbelievers, blind Agnostics and Atheists, are being poured in like rain to crack and crumble our walls, still there are some dry spots on which to place our narrow beds of Faith, on which we can repose our stiffened limbs; and," adds the honest and stubborn Creed believer, "this old house is the house of my father and forefathers, and the best one ever yet built; in it Christian believers have lived hundreds of years, and if it is now dark, mildewed, rotten and leaky, it is better than dark corridors and cellars of Agnosticism and Atheism, and it is sensible to live in this old house until a better one is built. Let the doubter, the Agnostic, the Atheist, the Scientist and Philosopher present their plans for a new edifice and commence the building of it, lay wide and long their much vaunted foundations of solid Scientific Truth, frame it with what they call their incontrovertible good and just principles, and lay over all a roof impervious to what they call Error and Superstition, and we will look it over!"

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What I now desire above all things else, is to assist in founding and building up a Religious Society which shall be guided by the highest principles of Truth and Right which the mind of our day can conceive.

I aspire by the aid of those who can sympathize with, and appreciate my views, to initiate a Church service which shall be modified in important respects from the old Liturgies.

Believing in the existence of a Paternal Power we should all strive to comprehend His character; and this knowledge of God, joined to a knowledge of ourselves, will enable us to understand our true relations with God and with each other. Then will be enlisted our conscience, our sense of duty, our dignity of character, and our most noble emotions, to help us perform all the duties growing out of these relations with our Divine Father and with our brother man.

This is true Religion and true Morality.

And while, as builder of the Bell St. Chapel and initiator of the Religious Society which I hope may in time worship therein, I ask a reasonable sympathy with, and adherence to my views from those who may found such Society, I should violate my own convictions of freedom and duty if I sought in any way to prevent the exercise of any other person's reason and individual judgment of what is right and true.

I would consecrate a Temple to God, to Truth, and to all that dignifies and ennobles Humanity!

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SECTION FIRST.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN NATURE AND IN HUMAN LIFE: AND MAN'S TRUE RELATION TO GOD.

NATURE AND LIFE: MIND AND MATTER.

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THE REVELATION OF GOD IN NATURE AND IN HUMAN LIFE: AND MAN'S TRUE RELATION TO GOD.

NATURE AND LIFE: MIND AND MATTER.

Much time has been spent by the human mind in the endeavor to conceive of the beginning of things. The human intellect has been strained from the earliest known history on this point, and a harmony of conclusions seems now to be arrived at, viz.: that man is not constituted in mind, body or senses to comprehend a beginning or origin of the least particle of matter, or of what we call mind; and we may safely say will never be. To be in accord with human reason there must always exist an *a priori* to all thought-of beginnings. It would seem wiser, therefore, to leave the problem of Creation, and pass on to the consideration of questions within the scope of human intelligence.

We perceive that organizations exist, combining mind and matter, or intelligence and phenomena.

What we term spirit, or mind, is always invisible to the human senses. No man ever saw the mind of another man, nor the mind of any living creature. The moving power and character of mind is known only by manifestations or phenomena. So of the mentality of the Power above the human mind, it is hidden and invisible to the human senses: but not so its

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manifestations, since the phenomena of Nature all indicate an interior Intelligence, a great Mind in all things.

We call *substance* that material from which all organized existences are formed. Substance is full of qualities and powers. We cannot conceive of the annihilation of a single grain of sand, but we can conceive of and do constantly perceive, the annihilation of the forms and life of all existences growing or evolving out of substance or earth!

All in life is rotation, change, evolution, and progress. The substance of earth is improved by the chemically improved dust of our bodies; and the influence of our mental life may have increased in a perceptible degree the great collective mind of Humanity which remains.

Nothing however can be evolved from substance which was not previously involuted, and since the offspring of substance is so superior in form and mental quality to undeveloped substance itself, we are justified in looking upon it as an *agency* or instrument merely, of a higher Power. In the flow of the great sea of animal life on this globe, the mind is dependent upon substance for its environment and expression. This intermingling of mind and matter is certainly a great mystery; perhaps next to the crowning mystery of the primal origin of all things.

But in spite of the unfathomable mysteries in which we are immersed, we do know so much of the orderings of Nature, of the wise guiding principles, or laws of growth, revealed through phenomena, that we may surely perceive the goodness and power of some great Mind above the human: and we are all on the road to the acquisition of more knowledge, in all our rela-

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tions with Nature, with each other, and in our relation with the great Mind of all substance which we call God !

I have placed on the panels of a door in Bell St. Chapel these words, "Mind and matter are co-existent and co-eternal" That is so far as human experience has taught us, they exist together, and are never dissociated ! I believe that the subtle power we call mind is always invisible, and can show itself only through the phenomena of matter. The recognition of this principle of the eternal co-existence of mind and matter I conceive to be a primal truth of the greatest importance to mankind. A clear perception of this principle enables the man of science, the philosopher, and every reflective mind to make truthful deductions from Nature and Life. It permits the religious man, and all believers in the existence of Divine Powers, to see as it were the form of the personality of his God, of his beneficent Maker and sustainer in life; and at the same time enables him to comprehend the character of that great Being whom every sincere Christian and every devotee of every Religion seeks to worship with mind and heart !

The mind of God like its little type in man is always invisible, but the phenomena of Nature make God visible in motion and in form. We find in man faintly shadowed the power of creating phenomena. The immense but paternal high Power above us permits us, his feeble but cherished children, to subdue and harness for our use the elements by which we are surrounded. We mount in the air by balloons; we course the surface of oceans by ships; we confine water in iron and steel, and set the fire to fight and to conquer it, and permit its escape in steam only on condition that it helps us in our work.

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Always embodied in matter, mind has all the thinking, contriving and shaping to do in this world and in the universe. Mind is in harmony with the elements and is seen in the earliest vegetable matter — the lichens on the surface of rocks roughened by rain and ocean movements. Mind is the motive power of all motion. No lever moves of itself, no wheel turns without the permission of mind. Mind is the power that causes the planets to revolve around the Sun. Mind is king over matter, although the power of mind must perpetuate itself through matter.

Simple and wonderful are the operations of Nature, and the writer believes it is given to man by the study of phenomena and their meanings to comprehend all that subserves his highest well-being in this world to know. In whatever way the original mind-spark of life may have come into existence, we know that on this earth mind perpetuates itself through its copartnership with matter. Thus from the substance of the earth, aided by the warmth and light of that glorious orb which is 1,400,000 times larger than our earth, the streams of all life and mind are perpetually fed.

The human mind can never perceive or conceive of the Infinite! It can never go beyond its own limitations. We cannot conceive of the beginning of a God of power, intelligence and goodness, but we know such a God exists, and sustains each and all of us while we exist. It is of no importance to have the mystery solved as to how time, space, matter and persistent force came into being; for Nonentity has no meaning to the human mind.

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LAWS AND PHENOMENA.

Man finds upon his advent upon earth certain invariable laws in operation which on examination he realizes were necessary to his birth and existence. There seem to be laws united with power relating to all substances; to earth, air, fire and water. He finds in vegetable nature, from the minutest lichen on rocks, gradations of size and usefulness and power up to the giant cedar trees of California. He finds minute animalculae, graded up to flying insects, and then up to humming birds, and on to the largest species of winged creatures. He finds in fish of stream, lake and the vast oceans, the same minute beginnings, and the same gradation of size and power up to the mighty whale.

He finds in the mineral kingdom, mud, sand, rocks, coal, salt, gems of great beauty wonderfully crystallized and colored, and at last he sees the diamond, the flashing beauty of which, our Sun itself deigns to display to our admiring gaze.

After this procession of lower grades and substances comes the animal race, all graded and sphered from the smallest in size to the mastodon. But man observes that the truer classification of the animal race is not by size but by mental power. Hence he ranks animals upward from those lowest in intelligence to Man, the highest and sovereign of all.

All these grades of being, man perceives are under the operation of laws. What are laws? Laws are influences or sub-

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jectivities of mind. What are known as the laws of nature are influences of a Mind higher, and moving in a higher sphere, than that of man. This high Power, the influences from which we name laws, is variously called by us God, Deity, etc.

And since man cannot perceive nor conceive of a first cause, the human reason is forced to fall back upon these laws as the agency of revelation of God's nature and character.

The word phenomena is an all-comprehensive word. Would you know the character of a man? Sum up the phenomena of words and deeds he exhibits throughout life, and you find the sum total is the man himself. Man is organized to fill one sphere in the many grades of existence. He is the flower of all the phenomena manifested in this world. But there are other and higher phenomena in the universe; phenomena indicating a supreme Mind and Character. Calling ourselves and everything in this world finite, we find that in the universe, which, by way of contrast, we must call Infinite. And as we look off into the heavens, we find the great invisible Mind of God manifesting itself through phenomena of colossal proportions. And since our finite and invisible minds are manifested to others by our works, we must believe that in the God-mind of the universe is combined, speaking humanly, all that is noble and manly in man, united to all that is sweet and lovely in woman; of which on our earth the noblest man and the noblest woman are faint types.

Hence although we cannot realize, even, the primal power, we can, through the manifestations of those laws, or agencies of Divine influence, discovered through the phenomena of this

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world and of the great universe, comprehend in a manner the power and the character of the God which they reveal.

The laws of nature which thus reveal God are as impersonal and invisible as is the Divine Mind by whose influence they operate. And we are justified in believing in the existence of invisible mental power above the human most of all, because man himself has the power to plan in the secrecy of his own mind, and can exert influence over both substance and mind in a similar manner! He is in a sense a Lilliputian God! He supplements natural laws by his social enactments, and he may be in a slight degree a creative agency.

We are able to personify a Causal Power because the qualities of intelligence and goodness are faintly but distinctly typified in the personalities of human kind!

The reader may say "You believe then that God is a personality like man?"

I answer, if mind is always associated with matter how can we imagine that the great Mind we call God is dissociated from substance?

Possibly we may never ascertain the particular form of matter in which the Mind of God especially inheres; and if we do not, there must be a good reason for this limitation of knowledge. But I for one do not despair of acquiring some definite ideas on the Personality of God. Indeed I now entertain a conviction that if the Sun be not the visible Personality of the God of our world it is, in its beneficent, life-giving and sustaining power the best type and manifestation of God. Reader! Do you doubt the existence of a great and beneficent

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Power, which in our language we have named God? Permit me to suggest to your intelligent observation some facts of nature bearing upon this subject; and allow me to speak of those analogies from nature which have led me to see the Personality of God represented by the Sun.

Mind inheres, we say, in earth or substance; and even in the solid rock is the embryo of mind, for by the action of the Sun and the elements, it becomes in time disintegrated and drops into mud or soil, from which arise all organized existences. Mind is thus immanent in all matter. It is the subtle essence of all substance and of all organized existences.

We are justified, I think, in believing that Divine Mind is the same in kind as the human mind, differing only in degree and power. The Divine Mind must be all powerful in liberty, and executive power of will; in the human mind we have also liberty and will in a limited degree; these powers of liberty and will exist in degrees and in all grades, from man downward to the smallest animalculae; and reasonably we may conjecture they exist in degrees, in grades of being from man upward to the highest power in the Universe that we name God, Deity, etc.

The mental and physical phenomena of a man from birth to death show his character. The same principle exists in the wide sphere of nature; in all animals the phenomena manifested throughout their whole lifetime indicate the character of their mind or mentality! I do not use the term "Instinct" in alluding to the mentality of the lower animals. That term has no meaning other than mind. What we call instinct is always

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mind, but graded to harmonize with the sphere of the animal. The wonderful wisdom and goodness of the Creator is conspicuous in the proportion and quality of the mental power given to every organized grade of existence in this world. Each is formed and fitted to fill the sphere of activities and duties in which it moves. From man down through every grade of animal life to the lowest in size and intelligence this law holds good. This principle of fitness to the intended sphere of action is also carried out in the different races of men. And the whole Universe so far as we know it, is in life and nature a vast series of gradations of powers.

From this I gather the *idea of an immanent God within our Solar System of worlds.* As all organized existences are graded and sphered in this world, from the smallest and most humble up to man, so by the principle of analogy we are justified in believing in a *gradation of spheres above man,* progressively advancing step by step to the sphere of a God; then still rising in power and intelligence until the acme of the human conception of Power is reached.

In our human mental reachings to find a first cause, we must stop somewhere, and is it not wisdom to stop just when and where the human mind in our day finds its limitations? Suppose we confine ourselves to our own Sun and Solar System, that is, to the conclusions and legitimate deductions, which reason and reflection permit us to reach by the aid of our senses. We may safely affirm there is *one* God, one high Power with whom we in this world have relations: and we also know the mental character of some high Power is wise and

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good, from the intelligent principles operating in nature. We should not lose sight of this great principle of grades of being, and spheres of action, which for one I believe to be an universal principle: and if true, the operation of it will carry us up beyond any possibility of the human mind to follow, and leave us only humility, gratitude, faith and hope in realizing the powers of our own sphere! We must also never lose sight of this universal truth that Mind is always conjoined with Substance or Matter. At the same time, I for one admit, that notwithstanding this conjunction, the subtle invisible mind in its organization with matter is the *essential* Power of the Universe. Mind united with substance to form an individual unity influences other unities of mind and substance, in grades below; and in a degree the lower grades of existence influence the upper grades; all grades of being and power are harmoniously enchained together, and there can be no broken or missing links, since all are subject to the great law of dependence and interdependence! And not only is it true that all grades of being are thus linked together, but each grade has its own proportionate measure of freedom and responsibility of action, and by reason of this freedom and responsibility the activities of the lower are affected by the higher powers through the great law of agencies. This law of agencies involves fidelity to trusts; thus introducing into Natural condition the Moral element and leading to the active exercise of the whole train of virtues.

Recurring again to the universal principle of grades and spheres which exist, I cannot but consider our own Solar Sys-

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tem limited in extent and power as an entity, relatively to other Solar Systems of which the universe is filled. For although the Solar Systems adjoin each other in perfect harmony, yet our knowledge of astronomy, limited as it is, recognizes a certain independence among them. Each star is a Sun with its family of planets moving around it as human children move in love and harmony around their mother; and each planet, like a human child, was brought forth from the substance of the parent Sun, which sustains it. And so with us as grown children, cannot we find our God close at hand? The manifestations of His presence are in our minds and hearts and all about us.

Would you have a glorious emblem of God? Behold our Sun! The Sun is great and powerful; this power calls for our wonder and admiration, but the beneficent, the all-creating, and all-sustaining *character* of the Sun calls for the highest and purest sentiments of human nature. Is not the Sun in its power and character the type of the *immediate* and nearest God of every world comprised in our Solar System?

It is a reasonable belief that every planet of our system, each crowded with existences, is born of the Sun, which is 1,400,000 times larger than our earth. What a laboratory of mind does the surface of this immense orb afford. I do not hesitate to affirm my belief and conviction that in the Sun we find the immediate God of our Solar System, every planet of which is kindly subjected to Its drawing and protective influence.

We may fancy the Sun with its beneficent character and

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creative and sustaining power either is an agency acting under a higher Power than itself, or an independent Power in the Sociology of the universe, a Power among millions of Suns. If this hypothesis of the Sociology of Powers is well founded, this universe has much more of infinity than philosophers up to our time have conceived. All the active principles of nature that we are familiar with, are divine! All being conceived by higher power, are we not justified in believing by analogy that these principles being wise and good are universal?

What objection can we bring to the idea that our Planetary System has its own immediate God, to create, to sustain, to supervise its family of planets, with a character unselfish and divine in its beneficence; and why — since mind is always resident in substance or matter, — why should not the Sun, since it is the largest body of matter of our Solar System, be for our System the grand reservoir of *mind* as it is of matter? Why is it not the source of all goodness, and of all laws and principles which exist in our System?

If by some Power incomprehensible to us, one God should be born into existence enjoying the well being that perfection insures, since Space and Time are infinite, why should not millions of the highest conceivable order of existences be brought into being? To my mind it is easy to believe, that every star is a Sun and a God in power! Each reigning supreme over his Planetary System! And as there are degrees of magnitude of Suns, so there are different degrees of glory and power existing in these Gods of Suns and their Planetary Systems. It is easier and more rational to believe, if this

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hypothesis be true, that each God is independent, rather than to believe that millions are dependent upon one God. Since the principles of fraternity, justice and equality are among men considered to be divine, we are justified in believing that divine equality and fraternity govern in the vast Sociology of the Gods.

It is impossible for the human mind to conceive of the beginning of one God: our mental difficulty is not increased by the attempt to imagine a million Gods. Time and space are infinite, and our Solar System is large enough as a sphere of operations for one God as symbolized by our Sun. Hence, it seems reasonable to imagine that in infinite time and space there are many beneficent, wise and powerful Gods, to occupy them.

"There is only one God," says the Mahometan, "and His name is Allah!" "There is only one God," say the Roman Catholic and old-time Orthodox Christian, "and He exists as a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost!" "There is only one God." echoes the Unitarian. The writer of these lines believes *there is only one God with whom man has intimate relations.* He believes this God is the immediate God of our entire Solar System: the immanent centre of all mental and physical power contained in our glorious Sun and in the varied life of all the planets which draw from the Sun their source and sustenance!

Our God, of whom our Sun is the symbol, is not only sustaining but is constantly creating, for all evolution and change is a perpetual creation. We are like moments of time constantly dying and constantly being born; like drops of rain

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that are born of the ocean, ascend, run their course on the earth and descend again into the ocean, to ascend again and descend continually.

This rotation in life is a glorious divine law or principle, the highest and best the intelligent human mind can conceive of. Renewed mind in renewed forms, with new and fresh experiences, is a divine principle of wisdom and love. The existence of a new baby with the beautiful drama of life to be evolved in its future, is of more value than the lives of fifty old men with worn out experiences of life; their candles of life are burnt out, while the torches of life of infants are just lighted for the beautiful experiences of life! Behold in this the divine law of *Rotation in Life!*

Let us be voluntarily grateful to that Life-giving and Life-sustaining Power which is revealed by Nature and by human experiences!

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KNOWLEDGE OF GOD: AND OUR RELATIONS TO HIM. MAN'S YEARNING AND GROPING AFTER GOD.

It is now 4.30 o'clock, a. m., and the glorious sun is just appearing above the horizon. Its wonderful radiance is streaming through the window in front of which, pen in hand, I place myself with mingled feelings of awe and gratitude towards some great Power which manifests its character through all the phenomena of this world! This Power is manifested on a grander scale as we look, on a bright starry night, out from this world into the heavens. Some wise thinker has said "The proper study of mankind is man." Is it not more or at least equally important for man, by all his embodied power and means, to study the character of the great powers above himself; to endeavor to comprehend his true relations with this mighty God, or these mighty Gods?

We may safely affirm that all perceive and admit the existence of powers other and above the human. If we do not know how, nor by whom, nor by what process, time, space, and substance were brought into existence, we do know positively that no man ever created absolutely anything in this universe. We are but the feeble sequences of powerful antecedents. And as these powers, other and higher than man, exist, and mani-

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fest themselves to him through phenomena, we cannot escape the conviction that man has relations with these higher powers. As the child has relations with its parents who are the immediate authors or agents of its existence, so have all mankind relations with the higher authors of existence. The ancients called this globe very properly "Mother Earth" and they do well who speak of God as "Our Father."

"Who by searching can find out God?" asks one. The author of these pages believes that by searching we can find out all of God, of His character and His qualities, which is necessary to our well-being in this world. We *must* know something of God before we can honestly and truly exercise the feelings of respect, love and reverence which our Christian friends insist we are in duty bound to pay to God. I for one would acknowledge that we do owe constant gratitude and love to the great immediate Power above humanity. But we must know *why* these feelings should be exercised. No reasonable person acts without an intelligent motive, and no being in the universe is entitled to man's reverence and gratitude unless the human reason, as it is constituted, can base such reverence and gratitude upon benefits received from the disinterested goodness of such being.

Before we talk of religion or of devotional duties towards God, we must first truly find our God. We must feel assured of His Existence in some form comprehensible to us. This has not been considered an easy thing by unbelievers, Atheists, and many learned men and scientists. And though I am bound as with hooks of steel to the belief and conviction of the exist-

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ence of an Almighty Power with whom we have relations, I wish it to be understood that I am not seeking to find the God of our friends the Orthodox Christians, nor any of the many Gods whose traits of character have been described by religious sects of past ages. And I say this while feeling no diminution of esteem for any class of honest believers. My parents, my own mother, was a sincere believer in Orthodox Christianity, and next to my God I feel justified in loving and worshipping my mother; as I think all do. I am not seeking, however, to prove the existence of any God of the unenlightened religious sects of any previous time. I am seeking to prove the existence, and demonstrate the goodness, of the great Mind and Heart of the universe.

As an infant child awakening in a dark night, full of affectionate instincts extends its little arms and gropes to find its mother, who is its all in all, so through the centuries has the human race groped to find its God; conscious that on some great being we each and all depend for life, and for all that makes life's value. All religions are born of this yearning after God, this desire to find the source of life, and of all its happy experiences; and to bring that source nearer to human consciousness. But since the human race has been indeed like an infant groping in the darkness of ignorance and superstition, not truly seeing its divine parent, it has imagined in a nightmare of terror many horrible and false ideals of God.

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MAN'S NEED OF A REASONABLE GOD.

Man if he requires any at all wants a reasonable God. He wants one who comprehends his own true relations with humanity; one who if he generously gives mankind life, does not attach to existence onerous conditions, hard or impossible to fulfil. Man wants a God who will reveal himself in such manner as to compel reasonable and intelligent homage. Now our Orthodox Christian brethren, those who compose the great mass of our churches, are most of them very pleasant to meet, most of them very sensible in worldly matters, and generally good sons, good husbands, and good, loving fathers. But strangely enough they seem to be very poor judges of man's requirements as to God and his character. They do not seem able to picture to us a truly paternal and all-sustaining Power! Yet they insist upon it that no one has a right to idealize his God for himself. All must accept the Bible description, whether or not it commends itself to their reason. For instance, when they say in one breath "There is but one God," and in the next that "Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are each equal to God," a humble doubter asks, "How can this be, *one* yet three?" They answer, "We want no doubting, no questioning; there are three in one, and one in three. Believe, or you will be damned to everlasting punishment with the devil and

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his angels, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. We dare not now attempt as formerly, to stamp out your questioning doubt with the sword and faggot; but we denounce all unbelief as sin, and threaten you with horrible torments after this life is ended, if you do not accept our doctrines." The Orthodox Christian, if consistent with his professed creed, preaches that man is by nature "utterly depraved, and prone to evil as the sparks fly upward."

The writer of these lines was born in 1806, and in those days these Orthodox doctrines were taught with vigor and sincerity. The stream of Christian faith had been handed down in purity and power from our Pilgrim Fathers and through them from Luther and Calvin. The father and mother of the writer were among the first to join the Beneficent Congregational Church of Providence, on Broad Street, called "The Round Top." They joined in 1793. My father was the fifth admitted among the men, and my mother the third among the women, who formed the original society under James Wilson, or "Parson Wilson" as he was called. And when my parents died, each eighty-two years old, they were the oldest members of that church. The old family pew was sold in 1883, having been ninety years in the family. In early childhood, I was sent into the Sunday-school, and afterwards into the family pew, to have my tender mind ingrained with the dreadful pessimistic tenets of Orthodox Christianity; and to this day I have not fully recovered from the terrible effect of that doctrinal instruction! I hope the reader will excuse my apparent egotism in thus alluding to myself and my family.

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I do so because my case illustrates that of thousands of others who were subjected to the same religious training in their youth. Things have changed in this particular somewhat, within eighty years. But still the same old plant of religious dogmatism is cultivated, the same unreasonable, revengeful and unfatherly God is held up as perfect, to be "worshipped with fear and trembling!" The same faith and belief in blood atonement as more saving than good works is inculcated, the same Heaven and Hell are held up as reward and punishment, awaiting those who do, or who do not accept the Church doctrines. Still the sheep and the goats are defined, not as the doers of good and the doers of evil, but as those who believe or refuse to believe some special tenet of the Orthodox Christian faith. It is indeed visible to all, that the bleak winter of old Orthodoxy is gradually softening and expanding into the Spring-like charity of more liberal views. But there are still many chilling winds to warn us that the better time is not yet come. The Episcopalians have for a long time modified their doctrines, especially so far as application to moral and well-to do outsiders is concerned. The Church whispers to such "Come among us and you will seldom hear us allude to hell, or total depravity. We have softened these doctrines, and now teach God's love more than His wrath." And many of the Orthodox Church people really believe that it is possible for an honest man full of good works to be saved, even if he has not joined the Church or subscribed to its doctrines. Although they feel more comfortable about such a man if he has been a regular attendant upon some Orthodox church than if he has been

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openly liberal in his views. The Unitarians were come-outers of the old Orthodox Church; but some have wandered farther from the old fold than others; and the conservative among the sect, those who believe in the "Kingship of Jesus" are uneasy as to where some who bear their name are drifting. And the attempt of some Unitarians to make their denominational name embrace all who love truth and righteousness whether they wish to call themselves Christian or not, is in my judgment a mistake. I believe the name Unitarian is limited to the Christian fold. But I believe the great need of man is for a reasonable God higher than all names or religions, and nearer to our consciousness than any system of belief inside or outside of Christianity.

The old Christian idea of God was that of a despot far below the character of many Christians who worshipped him. The God of many Christians of this day is worse than the ideal devil; and the doctrines of "eternal punishment," "original sin" and the like, are parts of a system of belief born and fashioned in the dark and cruel ages of human experience. Man now yearns to know a God who is the God of all perfection, of all knowledge and love. He yearns to know the God of Nature, whose beneficent gifts are all about us. He yearns to know the God who is evolved into human consciousness by and through the purity of heart and intelligence, by the virtues and winning excellencies of the best and noblest of mankind, as they typify and indicate the Divine Being in whom is sublimated and concreted all purity, intelligence, virtue and excellence. For are we not God's children, and must

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we not find the conception of the perfect Father in the best qualities of the offspring?

And how much we all need a conviction that this good Power above ourselves comprehends us, knows our thoughts and feelings, our strength and weakness. If we are accused of a crime we have not committed, we can then say within ourselves "God knows that I am innocent." What a consolation in all earthly trials to believe in and know this first, best and last friend, our Father and our God! How soothing to believe there is this friend always with us in our inner consciousness, our counsellor and our guide! When we act in accordance with our honest convictions of duty, even if our knowledge is limited and we make mistakes, we experience in our minds His smile of approval. A sincere and honest man true to his own intelligence and conscience, be he white or black, a king or his poorest subject, can stand before His Maker with dignity, face to face, eye to eye, and say "Am I not Thy child, am I not of Thy divine conception? Sincerely keeping my heart and conscience void of offense may I not, humbly, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, call Thee 'Father!'"

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DIVINE AGENCIES.

When we commence life how weak in mind and body we are. As we mount the stage to take an active part in the beautiful and interesting drama of life to which we are each and all invited, our divine Father perceives and kindly provides with a generous hand for all our wants. First of all the sacred and divine influences of human love lead through paths of roses to unite man and woman in holy matrimony. Then comes a birth, a little weakling, and who but our Divine Father provides for this poor little innocent helpless bud of hope and promise? He first provides parents who are only the happy agents to perform His will. The mother, the most honored of these agents, is constituted with a strength of love for, and devotion to her child which that child needs and must have to insure its well-being. And is it the mother that loves? Yes, but only as the happy and honored agent of God; for let us never forget that a Divine Power is behind all.

On a panel of a door in Bell Street Chapel I have caused to be inscribed this sentence: "The infant smiles not upon the mother, but God smiles through the infant." A Divine Power has supplied to every human creature a mother! This is the unique and priceless blessing to every individual of our race. He must be mentally blind, and therefore entitled not to our condemnation but to our pity, who fails to perceive in the

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operations of nature, in these wonderful human relations and in his own intelligence and conscience, revelations of a thinking and beneficent Power above.

God acts through agencies. Loving parents are the immediate agents of God, who constituted them to love us; so in fact it is God's love that shines through the mind and hearts of our parents. God in the nobility of His great mind and heart, in His concreted disinterestedness, assigns and makes over to parents all the credit and honor, all the exquisite pleasures of affection and love they feel for their children, and all that children feel for them; for God is the conceiver of and author of all natural affections of all organized existences. Especially is the mother the honored agent of God in the unquenchable exercise of her affection and care for her children. More highly than the father, is the mother honored of God; for the mother represents God in the purest love known to exist on earth. Let no man take the false position that woman is inferior to himself, for what God honors most is surely the highest and most honorable in this world! So next to God, let every son of Man love and reverence his mother. God for himself requires neither love nor gratitude, but his claim is assigned to our mothers and to all others in this world to whom gratitude, love and honor are due from us. Such is the incarnate disinterestedness of God in regard to his own personality. He expects nothing! He asks for nothing! He demands nothing! But he does require of us obedience to the laws of nature. And this He requires because obedience promotes the individual and collective well-being and happiness of humanity.

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Man's own consciousness is to himself his primal starting-point; the infant soon comprehends its relations to its parents, especially to its mother! In after time, even long before he approaches manhood, the child may be instructed to perceive beneficent agencies behind his mother, in fact all around him. Through a series of kind and disinterested agencies all visible back of his mother, he may attain to the idea of a Power invisible, higher than any visible agency, whom we call God. Varying ideas of the mode of existence and character of this great Being prevail among mankind; ideas dependent in a great measure upon our early education. There appears to be a trait in the character of this highest Power which is faintly typified in the most esteemed of the human race; and that is *disinterestedness*, or doing good because it subserves the well-being of others, not because it brings back material profit to the charitable party. For example, a man or woman with full liberty of mind to do otherwise, may give of his means, he may aid others by his time and labor, not asking, wishing, or expecting any return. This may be, and is, often done secretly, as for instance, subscribing to charities under the signature of "A friend." This is disinterested kindness, and properly considered to be a noble virtue! Now it is plainly visible to our minds that this noble virtue of disinterestedness is concreted in the character of *some* high invisible Power we call God. And this virtue of the great Mind and Heart of the beneficent Power is manifested not only in man, his especial object of love, but is shown throughout all lower organisms.

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THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

The character of God, I firmly believe, is shadowed forth in the character of a good and intelligent man. And surely our imagination can picture approximately, at least, even in our present undeveloped state, a perfect man. A perfect man might be considered a finite interpretation of the infinite God we believe in. The possibilities of the finite, in growth toward perfection, are not yet fully evolved. Beautiful and good as woman is, more perfect in character she is destined to appear. Wonderful as our greatest men and our best now are, our poets, our philosophers, our artists, the future will reveal their superiors. And as our human race advances in knowledge, in goodness, in the exercise of justice, so will our knowledge of God and appreciation of His character be developed in the same proportion.

It is safe to conclude, as I have said before, that what is virtuous in the character of a human being is concreted in a higher Power, since there must be a source to every stream!

I believe therefore in the existence of a high Power within the vastness of space in whom is combined the highest intelligence and the highest sentiments of the heart; such love and

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affection as our parents feel for their children! I believe that in the mind of this high Power originates all love, all disinterestedness, all justice. I believe He is the Author of all our precious family relations in life, and the Author also of fraternity in its widest sense, as between individuals, families, communities, states and nations. I believe that He expresses Himself in all the harmonies and beauties of nature which are so wonderfully adapted by His fatherly care to man's needs and delight.

The will and character of God are shown in relation to man by our constitutional powers and qualities. By our being placed in helpful relations with other created beings, and with nature in general. And above all, by the harmonious differentiation of the sexes. The will and character of God are shown by the affections of our hearts, which link us to each other; and in the mental powers which incite us to activity in all the various pursuits of life. Let your imagination assemble in one individual man or woman all the finest mental qualities, all the virtues, all the purest affections, and all the best-trained reason, and we have the lowest point of departure upward in imagining the wisdom and goodness and love of God! Is it reasonable to suppose that anything could come from man's virtue and wisdom which was not before in the mind and heart of God, our Divine Father?

What then is the character of God?

He is what is noble and manly in man. He is what is pure and feminine in woman. He is paternal to ourselves and to all creatures. He is more tender and more loving than a mother.

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The one God with whom humanity has relations is the One who sustains all nature, comprising man and all creatures below him. In this world is the God of this world to be found. And all scientific knowledge rightly understood serves to deepen our conviction of the wisdom and goodness of that Power which creates and sustains life upon our planet.

Our human minds must judge of all things by reason and reflection. And we must therefore conceive the perfect character of God through our own minds, aided by the information obtained by our senses of the powers of Nature. If we are capable of judging of infinitude at all, it must be as human and finite beings with human and finite powers. And a God whom we cannot so conceive and comprehend has no meaning at all for us. The operations of natural laws are most wonderful to the most thoughtful minds; and equally the goodness of God is most apparent to him who knows most of goodness. For us to feel a deep sense of the noble character of God we must reach out towards the true and the beautiful in all things. And then our idealized conception of God will give us a type to contemplate and to imitate humbly in our own characters.

We sing "Nearer my God to Thee."

What is it to live nearer to God? To know Him best we must consider ourselves as children before a loving parent. And as children with undeveloped minds yet love and confide in, and seek to imitate their parents, so let us endeavor to know by spiritual discernment the real character of God. There is nothing in the nature and constitution of things to prevent our living nearer to God than we now do. How

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natural and easy should it be to point out to a child the great Spirit of intelligence and goodness in the world of nature and of human life! To show the child that this Spirit of intelligence and goodness is in all and through all he sees and knows! And that its presence is specially manifested in and through his loving parents and friends! And how easy then to teach children that as intelligence and goodness govern God Himself in His relations to mankind, so on earth should we in our relations with each other be governed by the same great principles of truth and of kindness!

If all men sought a knowledge of God through these natural revelations of nature and life, it is incredible that any sane person should fail to find Him. But down through the ages up to the present period of time the prevailing ideas of the character of God have been more erroneous than any sensible person should entertain. Men have been called upon to make foolish prayers, like ignorant dissatisfied beggars, to a God whom they met to systematically misrepresent and vilify, as is even now done in many Christian churches! God has been represented by many popular religions as less intelligent, less good and less moral than the average man; and as such, demanding of us homage and love like a despot. No intelligent man or woman who truly respects himself or herself can longer believe in this false representation of God.

Sunday is an excellent institution, may it always exist! and may churches always exist. But may we learn to consecrate to the true God the temples of the future. May we have finer temples than now exist, and may the walls and ceilings

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of such be inscribed with the words of eternal truths, and with emblematic pictures, all doing justice to the sublime characteristics of our Heavenly Father! And may all, young and old, with inspiring music, with grateful hearts and humble acknowledgments to God, meet therein in a truer worship than any yet known to man!

God does not require this worship; it should be man's free offering to God.

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GOD REQUIRES NO GRATITUDE.

God has no need of the praise, homage, love or gratitude of man, but man has great need of exercising all these sentiments towards God. With an intelligent and just man the cherishing and the expression of these sentiments is a necessity; a demand of conscience; and the exquisite satisfaction he derives from them constitutes his highest privilege of experience. And it is reasonable to conclude that since the highest happiness and well-being of man and of all created beings is the end and aim of the activities of the high Power above man, so the free expression of gratitude from man toward this high Power should give satisfaction to the great mind and heart of God Himself. He could not feel such satisfaction if He required of us any exercise of worship; for this requirement would be derogatory both to His dignity and to ours.

No man that respects himself would beg to be praised and honored, however praiseworthy and honorable he might be. Conscious of his own integrity he would let his own character speak for itself in his acts. If he were not appreciated, he would exercise the virtue of modesty, and patiently wait until the distinction and honor due him would be voluntarily paid; his own dignity and self respect would demand this of himself.

We may all be sure that the character of God will not

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suffer by a comparison with that of any human being, and the so-called religious world has been mistaken in this important principle. All the principal Christian sects have taught and are still teaching that to be ungrateful towards our fellows for favors received, especially from those who have been disinterested in bestowing them, is justly considered among men to be a species of crime, although our community laws do not recognize ingratitude to be a punishable offence by fines or imprisonment. No disinterested benefactor can with any propriety make out an itemized bill and demand an equivalent from the parties benefited. All return must be voluntary on the part of recipients; but there exists in the human mind a sense of justice to itself, a feeling that there should be some recognition of favors bestowed. If ingratitude is a crime, the feeling and expression of gratitude is a simple duty; it is a feeling that all should cherish. The poor beggar has no money, but he can give gratitude. Grateful feelings should be as common as favors received, but a high minded good man will not withhold favors and charity because of the lack of thanks or gratitude from recipients.

Gratitude like other good sentiments of our minds should be cultivated. A study of our relations to each other teaches us that parents, children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives have mutual natural claims on each other to be unselfish. This inspires gratitude and a mutual disposition to give equivalents or make returns where it is possible.

In the laws of God all crimes against others are punished by unpleasant effects with reformatory intents; but for ingrati-

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tude to God who is the real author of our existence and all the blessings comprised in life, there is no special punishment, no more than there is for a lack of homage or love, or for non-perception of his existence. His Sun shines on all, and no laws giving happiness to man are suspended for the punishment of any one.

For to worship and be grateful towards God is a privilege pertaining to our liberty to exercise; and not to avail ourselves of these precious privileges is to deduct wilfully from our own happiness and well being. Man's own dignity requires of himself what God requires never, that is the deepest heart-felt gratitude towards God as being behind all.

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TO GOD WE OWE THE GREAT GIFT OF LIFE.

By no guiding principle of right or justice known among men has man any claim whatever to existence and the happiness that life may comprise. Life is a free gift to man, from a high Power existing antecedent to man's advent to this world! So we are of Divine origin. Life is costless to us, but priceless! The conception of man's existence with all its accessorial accompaniments could only originate in a high concreted Wisdom and Goodness; to fully appreciate which no man or woman can ever aspire, though man may in his best state of perfection faintly comprehend and typify in his own life the divine character. There are those who unjustly depreciate the value of life by the inquiry "Is life worth living?" There is no doubt of the unequal value of life to babes who receive it; but we must not forget that the parents themselves create or furnish the conditions of health and well being or otherwise, under which we are all born. So that man himself, and not God, is responsible for the inequalities of birth symbolized by the "silver spoon" and "wooden ladle." The power, the gift of life is from God; the *conditions* under which we are born are created by man and appertain to his liberty of will. At all events, life costs nothing! And be it of more or less value, all should accept and cherish it with grateful hearts. It is a combined gift of God and our parents, the latter decid-

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ing upon the time and the more or less happy conditions attending our advent. After all, the individual power of progressing and improving as we advance in life, which God has given us, compensates in a great measure for the inequalities of the conditions of our birth. Let the pessimistic Christian who has claimed through so many ages without reason, that man is by nature "totally depraved," let all, keep well in mind that man has no claim, and never had, to any existence whatever. Man has been brought into being by a high disinterested Power, and endowed with a liberty that makes his happiness depend upon himself; and further, if by reason of an existence to which he has no right or claim, he enjoys ever so small amount of happiness or well being, he should be grateful for that small amount, since he is not entitled to *any* amount whatever. The writer hopes that these just views when appreciated by those with pessimistic tendencies, will make them realize the injustice of attributing to the Providence of God the evils that exist in the world, such as war, oppressive governments, diseases, sickness, and death of loved ones, financial losses, injustices of others, etc. By the power of freedom in acting by units and masses, by knowledge given by experience, by acting justly, man may avoid the long catalogue of evils which he now experiences.

Let us vindicate the ways of God to man! God is not responsible for the crimes of humanity. Be grateful to and trustful in God!

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WHAT CAN MAN RENDER TO HIS GOD?
OR GRATITUDE AND OBEDIENCE TOWARD GOD.

To act justly towards all men, and to every living creature is possible; and if accomplished would go far towards perfecting in a moral point of view the human race. But few individuals, few communities, few nations in this 19th century have evolved themselves to this point. In our relations with God, to attribute to Him simple perfect justice in his relations with us, would be to characterize God very unjustly. We cannot attribute to Him justice in our human sense of that term! God manifests continually towards us the higher qualities of concreted generosity and love. It would be safe to affirm that he is *higher* in every quality indicating intelligence and goodness than any advanced human mind can conceive him to be. Equity and justice demand an equivalent in all our human givings and receivings in this life; but what equivalent can we give to God for the inestimable blessing of existence and all the happiness we have the power to work out of it. To be sure it is in our power feebly to reflect these noble traits in the character of God towards our fellow creatures: we are in a sense his children, and we are so constituted that we are enabled to be just, one towards another. We may be in a

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degree more than just, we can be generous. We may dignify and elevate ourselves by gratefully doing what we can to further the aims of our Divine Benefactor. As to the extent of our power and liberty we may oppose and thwart the aims of God, so by the power and extent of our liberty we may aid and co-operate in the furtherance of his will. The aim and intent of the Creater is that the human race shall be happy; but God will never do for man what man can do for himself. The pursuits and activities of man are given him to be exercised and to bear the fruit of happiness and content; and for man to make himself and others happy is to further God's will and intent. He should make the most and the best of this world rationally. To slight or to think lightly of the precious gift of life is a kind of insult to the divine Power that gave it. Life is not the less valuable because it costs us nothing. A class of men, many of them very sincere, teach to their fellow creatures that there will be another life beyond the grave, where there will be great joy for a few, and much tribulation and anguish for the many. But according to these preachers and teachers, God has so hedged the road to the next life with onerous conditions that the pious ministers themselves find it difficult when they die to leave their address with any degree of certainty! So it would be wise not to waste any gratitude for the next life until we are born into it and are able to survey our conditions and surroundings. But let us humbly acknowledge with grateful hearts the precious gift and reality of *this life* and rationally make the most of it. For one I do not feel any assurance of a future life; but I do feel I can cheerfully

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trust in God that all will be for the best! Hope is the cheering smile of God in our minds accompanying us through life. It is true we are not all equally fortunate and happy in this life, and we are cut off in life at all ages. But since none of us had any claim upon Divine Power to be born at all, we have no ground for complaint, be our lives long or short, be our happiness much or little. Surely however, it is not sinful for us to entertain a hope that what we desire may be given to us; and if we die hoping for a future life, yet do not receive it, total unconsciousness will render it impossible for a soul to realize a disappointment.

And since God is not the passionate, tyrannical tyrant man sometimes imagines Him to be, we have no fears of a hell of torment to check our hope!

What is it that should move us to love, to adore, to respect, to venerate our God? What motives have a legitimate claim to influence and inspire in the human mind these feelings? Is love inspired toward God because He is powerful? No! His power may inspire fear, deference, and a hope that He will not exercise His power to injure us. To this end in olden times prayers were offered, propitiatory sacrifices of animals and human beings made, to conciliate a supposed angry God whose power was ever ready to hurt. There was no true love to God in those early ages. It was fear alone. The uncivilized races of men were themselves brutal and cruel, and their conceptions of the character of God arose from their own mental state, so uncultivated and unevolved. Human nature is not naturally depraved but undeveloped. Human nature is

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full of rich capabilities, of rich ideal possibilities and endowed with wonderful capacities for growth. Let us take the rose as an emblem of human development. Walk into a well-furnished conservatory and admire the beautiful flower so rich in color and fragrance! A little bed of petals in a deep series one over the other, what admiration it inspires! Now contrast the exquisite Victoria rose with its lowly prototype, the prairie rose.

Also contrast the little sour, natural, unevolved forest crab-apple with our admirable Spitzenbergs, Gravensteins and large golden Pippins. The same with our mean seedling peaches as contrasted with our finest grafted fruit. The human mind is advancing, but in progress it is behind many fruits, flowers and animals; therefore while we should not lessen our endeavors to perfect our roses, our apples, our peaches, our dogs and our horses, let us pay more attention to the cultivation of our minds! In the human mind is implanted the same principle or power of advancement towards perfection as is found in the prairie rose, but the humble prototype of our desert wastes without cultivation; while it is constituted with powers to be evolved to perfection, it must be aided by man's intelligence, and it lends itself to man's influence. So should man lend himself to the influences constantly operating around him. By his liberty, by his intelligence he can cultivate himself in his relations with man. God shows his wisdom and persistent kindness; let us humbly imitate Him in our relations with our families and our neighbors. To co-operate with God in well doing, is to make ourselves one with Him.

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GOD OUR FATHER.

Are we not justified in calling God our divine Father? Granted that our resemblance to God as to power, wisdom, and goodness, is but Lilliputian, and that therefore the figure of speech "Our Father" is an exaggeration; still all that proceeds from a divine and perfect source must partake in some degree of its perfectness and divinity. And man as the crown and flower of all created beings must more than all others partake of the character of the Maker of all things. Certainly when we are honored by being made the active agents of God in every good work for our own development of character, and for the well-being of our kind, we represent God. And in so representing Him we faintly resemble Him. There is Divine Will: and there is in a small degree, human will. There is Divine Beneficence, and in a faint shadowing there is human beneficence. These resemblances justify us in claiming the name of sons and daughters of God! And when man is more developed in mental stature by a clear comprehension of the true character of God and of his own true relations to God, when man becomes more developed morally by time and experience, and by the knowledge and the exercise of all the virtues, his resemblance to his divine Father will become more apparent. To exercise human will as it should be exercised,

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is to make it co-operate with the Higher Will of a Higher Power. To exercise human will in the pursuit and achievement of human happiness and well-being is to co-operate with God Himself. Therefore good men and women all over the world, of every race, and of any religious name, who are honest and try to live out their convictions of duty may claim God as their divine and loving Father!

To comprehend our true relations with God enables us to comprehend the duties toward ourselves and toward our fellowmen which grow out of those relations. The sentiments proper for man to exercise toward his divine Father must or should be in harmony with the known character of that great Being. My strong faith is in the perfect righteousness and goodness of God! I do not believe there exists in nature or in human life, as constituted, anything to justify us in an arraignment of the Power or Powers above the human! The governing laws and principles which we recognize in the manifestations of nature are all beneficent. The mass of mankind have thought and acted like badly made-up children respecting their relations with God; crying and begging, fearful or hopeful, troublesome towards each other, and demanding great patience from their Divine Parent.

God's gift of life to man with all the happiness which life may comprise, has been full, rich and free; no onerous conditions attach to it. Whether we acknowledge the existence and goodness of God or not, the disinterested paternal kindness of God will not be withheld from man or from any living creature that exists! . Therefore our relation to God should be

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one of gratitude, love and highest veneration. We should humbly acknowledge the existence and divine Power of our first and greatest friend, that great Spirit of Intelligence and Goodness which called us into being. It is not necessary in order to cherish these sentiments of love and gratitude that we should perceive in our minds a *personality*. We know of no personality higher than the human. But since mentality exists in all, and is manifested in all the operations of nature and in all the qualities and powers of human life, we may look up, each in his own way, to the Source of all things in trust and confidence.

Let us adopt for ourselves and teach our children a religion that honors God and sustains the dignity of man. The true religion is one of faith in an infinite Righteousness and Love and the working out of these principles of the Divine Nature in human life.

While there is no merit in belief or in disbelief respecting religious creeds and concerns, there is merit in the honest endeavor to arrive at truth by diligent examination and perseverance. To search for truth is a privilege and a duty, and the truths we are most interested to know are those concerning our true relations with God and with man. After attaining this knowledge we can better perform the duties growing out of these relations, and our reward in performing voluntarily these duties will be the gift from God of an intelligent, pure conscience in which is manifested His approval.

Our truest relations to God ask from us humility, confidence, gratitude and love.

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SECTION SECOND.

MAN'S POWERS AND DUTIES.

MAN'S FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY.

THOUGHTS ON THE LAWS OF NATURE: WHY DO CHILDREN DIE?

THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN FREEDOM.

HUMAN REASON AND JUDGMENT.

LIBERTY IN THINKING.

THE LAW OF HUMAN GROWTH.

CONSCIENCE.

THE ELEMENTS OF A NOBLE CHARACTER.

JUSTICE. TRUTH. FAITH. HOPE.

HUMOR. CHARITY. ANIMALS.

SOCIAL REFORMS: TEMPERANCE.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL LIQUOR AMENDMENT.

CONCERNING CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS.

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

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MAN'S POWERS AND DUTIES.

MAN'S FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY.

In the Universe man holds an important position; although subject to the operations of the natural laws, he is free within those laws, free to do good or to do evil. This freedom and responsibility under the laws of mind and matter constitute his power and dignity. Man with all his possibilities of evolving and developing himself towards perfection, may place himself next to any Power his mind can conceive of; as a faithful, honest and intelligent dog may lovingly and respectfully face his master and look him fearlessly in the eye, so may an honest intelligent man stand erect mentally before his Maker; or as an innocent child before its parents.

Man is of the noblest extraction since he is in one sense a child of God Himself. He is created with power to feebly reflect in his own character the Spirit of Intelligence and Goodness from which he sprang. Let us cease to assent to the idea of man's natural depravity; it is a gross error and an insult both to man and to his Maker. A human being born as a perfect child in innocence and health, smiling to gladden the heart of his mother, and to excite the paternal pride of the father, is not "a child of wrath" but a revelation of the

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goodness of God. Man has power through his liberty of action to advance or to retard his own development. But we will affirm this much in his favor, in his lowest estate, he has individually and collectively paid, is paying, and will continue to pay, the full penalty of his errors and crimes in this world by the penalties that the divine laws of mind and matter have annexed to ignorance and crime. After doing this, a sufficient capital of innate intelligence and goodness always remains in the constitution of the human race to enable it to recommence and build itself up by advancing in virtue and knowledge. For the principle of man's development and recuperative powers, thank God, never becomes extinct in his race!

The stream cannot rise higher than the fount from which it flows, so God cannot be less intelligent than the combined intelligence of men and women; God cannot be less loving and affectionate than the kindest mother can be towards her innocent confiding child; no power of evolution can be higher than the involuting power which permits it.

How happy we should be in the consciousness that we may in a small degree partake of, and faintly shadow forth, the intelligence, goodness and character of God Himself; are we not in mental constitution, in our inborn liberty, a conception of the Divine Mind fitted to share in the government of this world?

The consideration of our relationship with the high Power, so high above us, justifies in us a deep sense of human dignity. Let us always act with the highest sense of honor and justice in all our relations in life.

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The freedom of man is his birthright, it belongs to the unchangeable laws or constitution of things. Man's freedom or liberty to think and act is the greatest boon of the human constitution, it is the greatest blessing or the greatest curse as we shall wisely use or ignorantly abuse it.

God is the author of all good, and man by virtue of his freedom is the author of both good and evil. Every sensible man gladly accepts the blessings of life, and with it all responsibilities comprised in his existence. God never interferes with the measure of freedom accorded to man, but man himself interferes with the freedom and well-being of his fellow-man. We find selfishness, pride, cruelty and injustice in the world; we also find an inequality in the powers of men which would not be in itself an evil, if we were all guided by true principles of justice, morality and religion. Although good always preponderates in the world in spite of all the errors, crimes and injustice which exist, yet how immeasurably could the well-being and happiness of mankind be increased, if man would exercise his power and freedom by substituting the kindness, the amenities and all the virtues which are in the power of human freedom to exercise, in place of injustice and selfishness.

Man's liberty and will are so great in this world, acting as he may individually or collectively, that he is justified in considering himself a power in the Universe, though no doubt comparatively a small one, still a power which justifies his taking a dignified position in his own estimation. Man is even a designer and creator, for he can create anything, from an

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earthern pitcher, to a splendid palace or church edifice, provided always, that his metals for making tools and building materials are furnished to him by a higher Power. Man is permitted by his physical and mental constitution to act and to do all that is safe and consistent with his well being to do. God will do nothing for man that man can do for himself. For any divine Power to interfere with human events would be unjust after having established responsibility and effects, good or bad, to all our actions. Man alone interferes with the liberty and will of his fellow-creatures.

Everything proves the intent and design that man should, or may, make himself happy in his sphere; and there is no God, no devil, no power in the Universe, but man himself that has brought evil into the world. That is, there is no power but his own wayward liberty, freedom and will to prevent his improving the world towards perfection. No power will or ought to force or change man into a happier state of existence; no intervention of a higher Power is necessary or would be in order to make man happier. The time will come, and I hope soon, when the cheek of every sensible man will flush with indignation at the libelous charge that a higher Power than man himself is the author of any misery or unhappiness in any form that exists in the world. By whatsoever and by whomsoever created, man exists the master of this world, and I have the strongest faith that he will continue to exist as a little power in the universe. This world is very habitable even at present, in spite of inundations, earthquakes, storms, and occasional cyclones. It has been estimated that not more than

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one millionth part of one per cent. of human life is lost in an age by these operations of nature. The world does not appear to be quite perfect, but like many a fine house, it is habitable before the final touches are given to it. Evolution will some day lead us to appreciate better the value of life, and we all enjoy enough now to justify the exercise of the deepest sense of gratitude to *some* wise and beneficent Power existing in a higher sphere than our own, from which emanated this world, and all the happiness, and possibilities of greater happiness which spring from its existence.

As man advances in knowledge, so will his power increase for good or for evil, as he may elect. With power to restrain himself, man is the author of all crime, and consequent misery in the world; with power to augment, man lessens the sum of human happiness. Man himself is the only obstructionist to progress in religion, in morals, in politics, in medicine. With power to elevate, man degrades himself; for instance, endowed with reason to guide, he voluntarily makes of himself a drunkard, which beasts, gifted only with instinct, decline to do. He smokes and chews tobacco, a nauseous filthy weed, which every beast, with divine instinct, superior to man's common sense in this matter, refuses to taste of. Man is the only animal endowed with the largest reason, freedom and will, and he is the only animal who stupidly abuses his reason, freedom and will to injure himself and others. In the matter of what is called religion, man has used the great freedom of belief with which he is endowed to build up a false and libelous conception of God, and compel others by cruel persecutions to

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worship it! But under all this misrepresentation and abuse the real and living God, that "God of the great mind and the great heart" which Thomas Paine believed in, preserves still his self-possession and equanimity. His love is not shaken toward the whole human family in the slightest degree. His sun shines alike on the sensible and the foolish and ignorant. No more than a human parent is moved to anger when his infant child pulls his hair, is God moved to anger at the foolish idea of some Christian believer that he has prepared an eternal hell of punishment for those who doubt the Christian scheme of salvation! If humor is of divine origin, and for one I believe it is, such a caricature of divine love and wisdom must awaken a smile on any celestial countenance! The true character of the all-seeing, all-comprehending God is intelligence, power, disinterestedness and love, all concreted and perfect.

Over us all our Heavenly Father extends the same beneficent care and protection, whatever we may think about Him, or even if we deny His existence.

A sincere belief in, and conscientious observance of any form of religious belief seems to bring satisfaction and content to the average mind, whether or not that belief is in consonance with the real facts of nature and human life. God himself seems to have annexed no onerous conditions to belief or to disbelief. We may all bask in the kind influences of His benevolence whether we appreciate that benevolence or not. In the providence of God, Calvin and Thomas Paine are given equal advantage and protection by His beneficent laws, and are allowed equal chances for happiness in all their

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relations of life. He who cannot see or idealize a God through the phenomena of nature, seems to me afflicted with mental blindness: but he may be honest and sincere and a good man.

And, if so, the Atheist even, need not fear being neglected or punished in this world or any other. Although he denies the existence of God, the sun will shine upon him even as upon religious devotees. His mother, his wife and his children will love him, his industry and prudence in business will not fail to bring due profits, and no other blessings will be denied him that his character and capacity entitle him to receive. The end and aim of Divine Existence is not to receive homage and worship from man. To worship and honor God is a human *privilege*. It is not a *requirement* of a vain and despotic God. And the Athiest who cannot perceive or imagine any paternal divine Power is justified in withholding such worship. I know of no class of men more sincere and honest than Agnostics and Atheists and unbelievers in general. It is not for their worldly interest to differ from such large and powerful interests in society as are comprised within the Church life. The Christian sects are not generally friendly to those who do not join them. If I understand the character of the Atheist, he is one who is determined not to adopt the idea of the existence of God without perceiving sufficient evidence to justify an honest conviction of the fact. He is more to be honored in holding such a position than those whose minds are so plastic that they receive easily without examination the belief of others in regard to the existence and character of the Supreme Being.

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The unbelief of Atheists and of all honest doubters implies previous reflection and examination to arrive at the position they hold, and is more hopeful than is the condition of one who, like many Christians, clings superstiously to a false conception of God opposed to all true reason and just views of life. And it may be that further reflection and deeper thought may carry all honest doubters to the point of belief in higher grades of intelligence and wisdom than that of man.

The Atheist has been often justified in his unbelief because the character of the God in whom he has been asked, even commanded, to believe, was represented to be so cruel and revengeful. Now that we can conceive of a Heavenly Father who is more transcendently noble and kind than the best of human beings, it may be far easier to bring the Agnostic and Atheist to the belief in God.

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THOUGHTS ON THE LAWS OF NATURE. WHY DO CHILDREN DIE?

We are immersed in God's laws of nature: we should study and be guided by them, or large deductions from our happiness will be the result of our neglect of care and wisdom. God's will is conspicuously shown by the death of imperfectly constituted children. The laws of nature are simply agencies, they have no responsibilities, they are but the influence of our Divine Father, who is behind them. The operations of the laws of nature express the will of God. Now even *we* can comprehend the necessity of keeping up the human races to a certain point of vitality and perfection; we recognize it as the law of "the survival of the fittest." It is like choosing men as soldiers for the army, they must *pass muster* or be refused. A better simile perhaps is the testing of cannon for government. Every cannon after being cast, is submitted to tests of strength and soundness, by extra charges of powder, before it can pass into the service of our country: each must *pass muster* or be condemned. Now precisely the same principle governs our divine Father in regard to our children. There are children so healthy and well born as to escape the necessity of these tests, but how many must be submitted to these tests and die under them? More than one-half of all

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children born, die under five years of age ; and so on ; the proportion diminishing after that age. These tests are measles, whooping cough, and an extended catalogue which the reader may call to mind. Now these are the tests to which God submits our children, in order that our race may be kept up to a certain degree of strength and health to insure its survival, and it *must* be so. It is of no use for affectionate parents to pray and weep about the loss of children since no human power can contravene the will of God in laws relating to the happiness and well being of mankind. The will of God should be done in all things, and the happiness of mankind is the end and aim of divine laws.

Let us never forget that we create circumstances, and that individually and collectively we are responsible for all error and crime. We as children experience the good or evil effects of the liberty and freedom of action of our parents and fore fathers ; and we are responsible each and all in our day and generation for all error and violations of the laws of nature which are the laws of God, and which are punished here by unpleasant physical and mental effects. Parents are sometimes painfully punished with the consciousness of transmitting to their posterity the effects of their wrong doing. Do you marry, for money or for any other consideration, a girl who has the misfortune to have entailed upon her any constitutional disease, such as scrofula, consumption or any malformation of mind or body? If you do this you commit a species of crime, and the consequences of the crime will inevitably fall upon both parents in exact proportion to the

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enormity of it. Sickly, malformed children are invited to appear in the world who should never have been invited, but who come with no power of refusal, to suffer by sickness and death. The sufferings of such children are reflected back upon their parents who are the wrong doers. Parents are punished by their wounded affections, for parents cannot escape from the natural instincts of love and affection towards their children who suffer, sicken and die. Parents experience heart-rending sorrow at the physical ills of their children, loss of time in watching, terrible anxiety and desire to alleviate the sufferings of their dear children unwillingly and cruelly cut off from life, heavy expenses of funerals, medicine and doctor's visits; added to this is the consciousness, supposing the parents have common intelligence, that they themselves are the guilty parties who have caused this suffering. All these evils might have been avoided by the knowledge and observance of the laws of heredity, for from healthy parents come healthy, happy children.

Some intelligent Power in a sphere higher than the one man moves in, has established what we term "the laws of nature," and the good and wicked, the ugly and the beautiful in humanity, are all inevitably subjected to their unswerving action.

We all know that the saint and the sinner, the king and his meanest subject are all treated alike in the operation of natural laws. Carelessness, in its effects, is often equivalent to crime, and by social human laws is becoming more and more so considered. God never interferes to prevent the disas-

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ters attendant on carelessness in human freedom; and there is no partiality to individuals shown by any Superior Power. In stepping carelessly upon a glare of ice, the Pope himself would slip as soon as his humblest follower. There are no "special providences" in favor of the pious or sinful, none in regard to those who pray or those who abstain from prayer; and the sooner we realize the truth of this principle the better will it be for us.

With our freedom and liberty is linked responsibility; and they greatly err who believe that God interferes in the acts of men by what is called "special providences," for if He did so, He would remove from us our individual and collective responsibility and take it upon Himself. And this he never does. Ingrained in the constitution of things on this planet is the kindly corrective influence of the inevitable bad consequences of crime and error, and the instructive good consequences of virtuous and intelligent action.

We may doubt the truth of any system of worship, that cannot weave into its service all truth of every science and department of human knowledge. There are no discords in the harmony of nature, except those discords that appertain to the liberty of man to make, within the province of his natural power. For as interference of the finest hair may disturb the fine mechanism of a watch, so may the misuse of human liberty and power disturb the harmony that might exist in man's relations with his fellow man, the laws of nature, and his God. Must we then condemn the institution of human liberty by higher powers? His liberty dignifies and elevates

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man in the scale of being above all other animals. But there is great responsibility attending the exercise of it in face of the divine laws of nature, and in all our relations with our fellow creatures. Liberty should be in harmony with justice and kind consideration to all above us and below us in the grade of social existence, and to grades of animals beneath us. Responsibility of effects is the inevitable accompanying shadow of the exercise of human liberty! To the extent of his liberty, man individually and collectively, is the author of all the effects consequent upon the exercise of his liberty and will. The physical and mental conditions into which we are born, the various degrees of slavery in which as individuals and communities we find ourselves placed, the injustices, the power of ignorance and superstition to which we are subjected, do not contravene the extent and truth of this law of human liberty, since by and through human liberty these conditions of man are created. Would man exchange his existence with a comparatively irresponsible lower animal, and thus lose the dignity and intelligence that appertain to his caste? I think not! No one can contend, however, that man's will is not circumscribed. He is under and subject to the influence of universal divine law. The existence of divine invisible Mind is proved by the operation of law, as the existence of human mind is proved by man's creations of constitutions and his social invisible laws, also in his creations of material forms, materials being furnished by a higher Power. Man is endowed with reason and power to be just towards his fellows, he creates all the laws of sociology; all political laws,

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all his religions are of his own conception and creation. God permits the existence of all religions, whatever their errors and superstitions; we may pray, and write our religious creeds, state our beliefs, insist upon the fact that we are of sufficient importance in the economy of nature to be immortal, or we may believe that death ends all: it pertains to human liberty to believe in anything. God makes no sign in ratification of what is true, nor does He condemn what a portion of us think is false! The world and the universe are full of truth, but man must exercise his activities of mind to discover it. Man must solve all problems that interest himself. Now let us all be guided in our researches by reason and experience, and work out our own salvation from error and superstition which bear us down. We will avail ourselves of our God-given privilege of worshipping Him in our own way, as we may incline. Let us pretend to no knowledge we do not possess, and no love or inspiration we do not feel, for God loves sincerity in all things.

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THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN FREEDOM.

Each mind is a little moral world in itself, having its own laws, with a central supervising power we call the Ego, or consciousness. Like a community each mind has its judge or ruler, it has its judiciary or reflective powers in constant session, except when we are asleep, to judge of right and wrong. Each mind has also its executive power, or will, to act upon the decisions of the superior reflective powers of the mind, like the marshal or constable who obeys the behests of a court. The Executive power is not responsible for the perfection of the Constitution, but only for the execution of laws, and courts, from the Supreme Court of the United States downwards, only decide in accordance with the higher laws of the Constitution; so in the individual mind there are absolute immutable principles of right and justice to which the judgments and decisions of the court of the mind refer, and which the will or executive power is bound to obey. Since mind is concomitant with all organized matter in all nature, the degree and quality of mind in each organized being, is in exact accordance with the sphere in which that organized being is intended to move. By the operation of this law, which was

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not instituted by the organism itself but by a higher power, it cannot swerve from the orbit of its sphere. Therefore human liberty, which I believe to be absolute under divine laws in its own department of life, is limited like that of all organized existence both beneath and above man to the sphere of man's own powers and duties. Liberty is a power or quality of the human mind, which is of all others the highest and most complex in its organization. Through this power of liberty, or the power to shape our own action toward ends which the reason perceives to be good, comes the ability to make progress, or the power of evolution. From the godlike liberty of the human mind proceed its activities. From its activities, conjointly with the faculty of memory, comes experience, which, by the aid of reason, impels to improvement. This grand principle of growth or development rests upon the glorious gift of freedom and human liberty of thought and will. For without freedom and liberty to act as we wish, there could be no vice and no virtue among men. All our acting and even our thinking would in that case be but the exercise of some arbitrary power outside our own natures. The belief in the doctrine of necessity, *i. e.* that a human being *must* do what he or she does do, if carried out in practice is, it appears to me, one of the most erroneous and destructive that the human mind can conceive of. To the mind accepting this doctrine, human responsibility has no meaning, virtue and vice have no meaning. If the believer in *necessity* believes in justice, then he should believe that the consequences attendant on virtue and vice should be the same. Why should virtuous conduct

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be productive of happiness, and vicious conduct be productive of misery? Why if the virtuous and vicious *must* do as they *do*, have we any need of human tribunals, of any judges or juries? The believers in this doctrine of necessity must think that God is in error, inasmuch as he attaches to virtuous action effects that are both pleasant and encouraging to us to persevere in the guiding principles of conscience and reason, and in scientific research after truth; and attaches the opposite effects to wrong action.

No, rounded and full to the measure of our being is the liberty accorded to man by Nature, which is but another name for the Power above all nature and life. Individual liberty is as rounded and full as the collective liberty of a nation, which is an entity composed of individuals. That there are restraints and unjust limitations of human liberty toward individuals and toward nations is undeniable. But these restraints proceed from a misuse of liberty of action on the part of other associations of human individuals. Man has the liberty to do wrong as well as to do right, hence the evil in the world, not of God's but of man's creation. And God having instituted good effects to follow good and wise actions, and bad effects to follow bad and foolish actions, could not justly interfere in the operation of His inexorable laws with what are called "special providences." Hence all prayers offered to God, uttered with intent to induce Him to avert from us calamity which is caused by our own ignorance or wrong doing, is not only folly, but an insult to the justice and beneficence of our Heavenly Father. It is doubting the wisdom of God "who

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orders all things well" to pray for anything, either spiritual or material. It is a futile attempt to substitute the will or power of man for the will or power of God.

Address our God either in private or in public assembly, not in begging petition alike dishonoring to Him and to us, but with hearts overflowing with gratitude and love give humble acknowledgments of the blessings we have received. Such grateful acknowledgments of favors received, coupled with a confession of our own sins, both of omission and commission, would instill into the minds of listening children a knowledge of our true relations with God, and would thus aid in promoting the truest principles of religion. And, although, as I have often said before, God does not require either public or private recognition of His kind care and sustenance, no man can afford to forego the privilege of openly expressed gratitude to that Power which has endowed us with life and all the well being that human liberty permits us to enjoy. The exercise of even this high privilege of openly acknowledging the Divine Beneficence appertains to the free choice of human freedom. Man has the power to comprehend his own relationship with God; and by virtue of his inborn freedom he may keep himself far off or near to Him. The more man's heart and head are rightly and harmoniously cultivated, the nearer I believe will he approach God. Let us all aspire by the cultivation of intelligence and goodness to be the true sons and daughters of God! A spark of the Divine Mind more or less bright exists in every human mind and heart. By the exercise of kindness and sincerity toward those with whom we have relations and

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by the study and appreciation of our true relations with our divine Father that divine spark may be fanned into an enduring flame to light and cheer us through the world; and when we die we can in full faith trust that the Power which made our birth a blessing will not make an inevitable death a misfortune.

How shall we use and develop human freedom? Since by the endowment of human liberty our minds may *will*, and we may freely perform in this life every duty, we need not pray to God for strength to enable us to be virtuous. No God nor devil prevents man's performance of all moral and religious duties. Having already received from Divine Beneficence a mind, with reason, heart and hands with power to do all that we should do, it is useless and puerile to seek for further favors from our Divine Father. This seeking would imply that God had wilfully or unintentionally omitted something from his free gifts that we were justified in reminding him of. On the contrary we should ever gratefully acknowledge that we have received all that we need from One whose benevolence requires no promptings from His earthly children.

No reply to begging petitions has ever been received by man from any Power in the universe. Nor should such reply be received from an infinite Wisdom and Love. Petitions are sometimes in order from one human being toward another of superior power, and perhaps of tyrannical purpose. But not from man toward the Giver of all good.

How wise and admirable is the conception of the whole constitution of man, bodily and mentally! And then our social

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and family relations and our harmonious relation to external nature. No man or woman is wise enough to criticise these gifts of God to us, or to suggest an improvement by begging petitions to the Supreme Giver! In the higher grade of being lies the power to comprehend the nature and the needs of the inferior grade. To a much lesser degree can the inferior comprehend the higher. There are some virtues in grades of being below man, which man finds it difficult to attain. For example the dog has an unquestioning confidence and affection toward his Master. In man's relations with God this same confidence and affection should exist, with the added assurance that evils which beset us are not caused by the injustice of God, but result from the operation of wise and inexorable laws. Should a man lose his children, should his house be destroyed by fire, should he, lacking obedience to some law of nature take a severe cold and die, his last thought should be "All these misfortunes rightly happen." God gives us life freely, but with the gift are annexed conditions which must be fulfilled. Natural and moral laws must be obeyed.

Every man should be educated to understand, accept and obey these laws. Man is endowed with liberty to think and study and learn these laws, and he is also endowed with liberty of action to obey them. He is finding out the justice and necessity of their existence by bitter experience, but he is endowed with liberty to so act as to place himself in harmony with these laws and ensure his well being and happiness. He is learning how with care he may secure old age, and how by attention to the laws of heredity his children may be well

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constituted. If by reason of our own disobedience to God's laws severe consequences of suffering come upon us, let us not impugn the justice of God, but rather, exercising confidence and love, seek to learn how to avoid such calamities in the future.

Not only is our divine Father to be honored by dedicating memorial churches, by grateful acknowledgments, and by that warmth of heart love growing out of our consciousness that we are the objects of His generous disinterested care, but more than all we should honor Him to the full power of our human freedom and will by co-operating with Him in advancing the well being of humanity. The limitations or bounds of our human freedom and will are as wide as the world we live in, and as extended as are human activities and human relations. Within these bounds we are responsible for evil conditions, and to this extent we may co-operate with God in helping mankind to attain more and more perfect conditions.

There is power in human organization, and it pertains to human liberty to organize for good or for evil. And both forms of combination may be successful in their aims. For man to organize, is for him to *exercise collectively* human freedom and will power. Freedom and will have in the abstract no moral quality. It is the mind and heart of man which are responsible for their use toward the highest ends. And although thought and purpose are so free and unhindered in the individual that no other can even know what passes in a man's mind, the consequences of acts resulting from the most secret purposes are shared by all related to him. No man's

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virtuous acts result in good to himself alone. And no man can commit a crime without injuring the well being of his family, of the community in which he lives, and the nation to which he belongs. So that individually we are affected by and affect society. A virtuous or an evil act like a pebble dropped into the calm surface of a pond sends an influence to the outward verge of social organism.

Truly it is said "By their works ye shall know them." We know the nature of God by His works of kindness and wisdom: each man is known by the deeds of his life. I would that the great principles of justice, kindness and a reasonable charity to all, might be universally recognized, taught and practiced.

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HUMAN REASON AND JUDGMENT.

Let us not forget that by human reason and experience we are to judge of all things mental and physical in this world. The senses are the faithful servants of man's intellect, but they are without intelligence or responsibility. They state to the mind exactly what they see, hear, taste and smell. The senses are mere tools used by the mind to obtain information of the external world. The mind itself, isolated in the dark recesses of the skull, elaborates and works up the information thus received and stores it away in its chambers under the name of knowledge or experience. And we have no other standards for judgment of the relative value of the knowledge we possess than the human reason. We must judge by human reason of our relations to God and our relations to man, as well as of all matters pertaining to physical existence and the laws of nature. And when a theologian presents to us for our sanction and credence any doctrine or article of belief which violates our reason and common sense, we must reject such as an insult to human reason. And if the sentiment or affirmation such a theologian may urge is also derogatory to the character of God, we may doubly resent it as an insult to the dignity of both God and man. I count the dogma of an eternal hell of torment a striking example of such a double insult to the character of both God and man. All such ideas are unfounded in experience and violate every dictate of reason and justice. Why will not mankind forever cast aside

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the pessimistic and unreasonable idea that God has attached such conditions to His gift of life to man as would rob it of all its value !

It is true that all sects are softening the expression of old dogmas. And many who still profess them, I believe have secretly repudiated them for the most part; for as Matthew Arnold says in substance, "Insincerity in teaching religious doctrines is the crime of our age."

In olden times Christians felt a strong and fervent faith in the dogmas of the church. The Inquisition is a witness to the intense faith of many Christians of an earlier age in a cruel and revengeful God. These cruel methods of enlarging the Church, and punishing those who will not join it, are now softened and changed by reason and scientific knowledge. The enlightening influences of advancing civilization have affected even the bad theologies; until the vast majority of the Church have in a measure outgrown the superstitions of their forefathers.

The influences which lead toward the recognition of the human reason as the supreme judge of what it is right and wise to believe and to do are increasing every day. We have newspapers and periodicals devoted to "establishing religion upon a scientific basis," and taking "truth for authority and not authority for truth."

That the intelligent apprehension of religion and the growth of a true religion may become universal, we must secure for all human kind, children as well as adults, perfect liberty in thinking.

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LIBERTY IN THINKING.

What greater service can we render to our children than to teach them to think, to think for themselves. As the bird mother teaches her fledgelings to use their wings, to hop, and move their pinions and finally to soar, so in regard to their minds should we act towards our children. While we honestly teach them the truest and best we know in the principles of morality and religion, yet in teaching them let us leave their minds free. Many children by exercising the spiritual forces within them, arrive at a higher point of intelligence and goodness than their parents ever attained. Indeed there is naturally in the average human parent's mind and heart an exciting hope that his children may arrive at honorable distinction and position in the world; and there can therefore be no jealousy, no opposition to children becoming happier and higher every way than their parents. God by implanting this disinterestedness in the minds of parents has willed the existence of a principle in the parental mind, which unwittingly operates in accordance with the divine principles of development and evolution. We might perhaps safely trust this natural action in parents towards their children were it not for the hateful principles and influence of the churches with fixed creeds of

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belief, requiring conformity to narrow bigoted views on threats of direful consequences in this world and in the world which they believe is to come. We must however be charitable towards the superstitious sects, darkened in their minds, for as Christ said of his murderers, "They know not what they do."

After teaching our children the best we know, we must leave them as they develop into the reflecting and reasoning period of life, to be guided by the divine principles of freedom and responsibility. Let us reason with children in advocacy of what we believe is best and true, but let children reflect and reason also, let them examine and decide in accordance with their own honest convictions. Since new light and truth in regard to God and religion are being constantly evolved, may we all keep our minds receptive to new light.

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THE LAW OF HUMAN GROWTH.

Some great Mind above the human with power to execute the decisions of its own divine will, must have conceived the great principle of Evolution, or constant change in all organized existences and in all substance. The least change seems to be in the Ego or conscious identity of mind, for each individual human being persistently recognizes himself from his first dawnings of thought through a long life of changes in his weight, and form, changes in views, in guiding principles, in politics, in religion; and it is a notable fact that no man, woman or child would change his mental constitution, his own identity, for that of another. John Smith knows himself intimately, knows his own hopes, his own secret thoughts which nobody else knows, his own enjoyments; knows what he most loves, knows his own Ego is his *own*, realizes that his own existence is a precious unique original, unlike any other, given by God himself, for his own special enjoyment, and he would not swap his own identity for that of any other man or woman in existence. John Smith would like a change of conditions, and he is constantly striving to evolve himself into better conditions. In this sense we each and all believe in Evolution, in which every man and woman plays a conspicuous part.

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No man can conceive of a beginning of creation in nature; but since evolution makes a continuous change of form, of mind, and conditions in ourselves and in our progeny, is not man, and are not all other beings involved in the process of a perpetual creation? There certainly exists in activity on this earth a law of change, of advancement, of evolution, which implies progress in man toward perfection; in animals by instinct toward better conditions and usefulness; in trees, toward more perfect trees, etc. Since mind is the power that moves all material things, all evolutionary changes must be effected through the operations and activities of mind in every grade of existence. Not quite satisfied with its present state, there is a perpetual effort of the human mind to exchange its present good conditions for the better, and an exciting hope and aim to arrive finally at the best conditions in life. Through the influences of the human mind the domestic useful races of animals, birds, etc., are improved. By the exercise of human intelligence also are wild fruits, shrubs and flowers made more beautiful and perfect. The kind intent of a Higher Power is visible in all our natural relations and pursuits. Useless would be the nervous activities of the human mind if no objects were furnished upon which to exercise our faculties. It matters not from how humble a point humanity originated, since we did not originate ourselves we have no responsibility in this mattter. It was by some Divine Power we came into life. If through a monkey race, as Darwin supposes, then with pride we may look back and point to the fact that from a humble beginning, through the efforts of the human mind,

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we have evolved ourselves to be what we now are. Our progress has been made gradually in time, by experience laid away in the individual mind, by its power of memory and the ability given to every age to draw from the great store-house of traditional and historical experiences of past humanity. But there are two sides to the power of progress or evolution. Let us not forget that the human mind is constituted with a power of will and free agency which is its own to exercise. This free will may be used, and is used as a retardative power, in the processes of the evolution of humanity. Human free will is limited as compared with a higher will-power outside, but is never interfered with so far as it goes, by any power in the universe; for it is morally impossible it should be, by any just Power above the human, except by the reformatory bad effects or consequences attached to errors and crimes, and the good effects attached to wise and virtuous actions. Evolution does not escape this power of individual and united human will, which is often wrongfully used to set back the advance of knowledge and general progress. We see this retardative power in bad personal habits, in rum and tobacco, in wilful perseverance in doing wrong when we have the power to do right, in organizing and sustaining bad governments and bad religions, idealizing gods with a bad character, and in doing generally all the evil that human free will and liberty permit us to accomplish in this world. Let us organize, however, no government, no religion, in which the great principle of progress or evolution toward the better is not recognized; and we want no evolution in which the

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retardive power of human will and free agency is not also recognized. Are not all inventions, all discoveries, all improvements in the arts, all governments, all organizations moral and religious, in short, is not all evolutionary progress toward the good, and all reactionary tendency toward the bad in human affairs, made through the activities of freedom of the human mind and heart?

The power which changes the matter composing our bodies is a power wholly outside of ourselves, and we are involuntarily subjected to its action as we are to the law of the circulation of the blood. But changes in our views and aims, which must always precede changes in our actions, appertain to our mental power, and are the offspring of reason and choice. All social laws by which man seeks to exercise the collective wisdom of humanity to effect more rapid growth toward better conditions, appertain especially to man's power to create, and his freedom to change human conditions in accordance with his own will.

The human mind by experience and reason may comprehend all of the Divine Will which it is necessary for man's well being that he should know. And the law of human growth includes in its action man's intelligent effort to obey that Divine Will.

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CONSCIENCE.

It is through the exercise of the will that we progress or retrograde in our personal morality. There is another power in the human mind above even this great executive will: for in every human mind God has reserved for Himself a little field of influence which we call *conscience.* Conscience is the *ought* to which every human mind assents. Conscience is the embodiment of the law of right action. Each individual conscience is a little code of principles made up for personal reference.

But although God has thus given us a sense of what is right and wrong, He never interferes with our freedom of decision under this law. God permits us to violate our consciences. He permits the conscience itself to be modified and affected it its action by influences of education, by self-reflection and self-discipline, by the influence of parents, of teachers, of ministers, of all whom we love and respect, and by all the varied effects of the social organism upon the individual life.

Man finds himself constituted with personal consciousness, and judgment born of experience and reflection, which give him power to comprehend what is right and what is wrong. He is also permitted to experience in his own acts, and to

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notice in the acts of others, the good effects of certain series of actions and the bad effects of certain other series of actions. This may convince him that he is responsible for evil and should obey the law of right in his conscience.

There are heights and depths in the laws of mind which are less understood than in the laws of matter. In the laws of conscience for instance, we are dependent upon education, and education depends upon circumstances which we create. In the construction of conscience in many cases, reason, the natural guide, is not permitted to govern, or rather is not developed by reflection and experience. For instance, the young thieves attached to a gang of robbers are taught as a matter of conscience, to steal on every available occasion, and their consciences are wounded when they let slip an occasion of filching, and the public sentiment of the gang condemns them. The poor Hindoo widow who burns herself upon the funeral pile of her husband does it in obedience to the laws of conscience created by a superstitious public sentiment. It may seem to be a hard doctrine to declare, that in every case to act in accordance with an approving conscience carries with it the smile of God in the soul, a melancholy smile it may be in the case of the young thief and the poor sacrificed widow, but such is the law of conscience in regard to sincerity, and it is just and must be so. God cannot with justice require of any human being to act contrary to the *best* he knows; the same law holds good with the intelligent as with the ignorant, we should act all of us honestly and sincerely in accordance with the *best* we know. So our Puritan fathers in persecuting and

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hanging the poor Quakers did the *best* they knew. Hence it is of vital importance that we develop the spirit of intelligence and freedom in our plans of education, in our moral and religious principles. Let us never forget that we are free, and that an inevitable responsibility accompanies soul freedom, and we are guilty if we do not search diligently to find the truth in all questions of Religion and Morality. The guilty are those who do not teach the best they know, who do not give us their honest true thought, be they parents or moral and religious teachers. To the insincere there can be no self-respect, no approbation of divine Power can be realized in their consciences. There are situations in which it is very hard to obey one's conscience. For instance, here is a minister, who when fresh from the teachings of his Christian parents and his Orthodox or conservative Unitarian ministers, passed through the divinity school, accepted and honestly believed in the truth of the Orthodox or Unitarian creed as the case might be. This for years he had sincerely taught to his confiding congregation as *truth*. But by reflection, by studying the arguments of honest Deists and unbelievers, perhaps with the honest intent to persuade and reform them into his own Christian fold, he finds new light breaking into his mind, his own reason has forced him to change his views, he has new convictions, stronger and better founded than his old adopted beliefs, because they are legitimately built up by study, reflection and the honest exercise of his own reason. What is to be done? shall he continue to preach what he now believes to be a lie, and thus sacrifice his conscience? He feels that when

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he taught error, when he maligned and vilified God by his honest misrepresentations of his character, yet as God loves sincerity and good intentions, His smile was not withheld from his conscience; but if he continues to preach what he himself believes to be false, the smile of his God will be changed into a frown of disapproval. And if his insincerity is discovered by the world he will be despised as a hypocrite; all sincere believers in erroneous views will regard him, if he is detected, with the same feelings, in which he himself must partake. The true and noble thing for this Christian gentleman to do, is to remain honest to his new convictions of truth and duty, and to frankly avow his change of belief, and come life or come death, come what will, he should express his determination to remain honest and true before God and man. If a part of, or the entire congregation to whom he has preached, turns against him, he will feel conscious of his own sincerity and that he has God on his side, whose presence will be immanent in his mind and heart.

One indeed may be sincere in the belief and teaching of a hurtful error; and there may be a measure of innocency in the commission of wrong actions which results from the want of knowledge. But there is no innocency in ignorance when we have it in our power to acquire knowledge, and carelessness is never excusable. It is certainly the worst phase of commission of wrong when there is malice of intent to commit crime. But inasmuch as man is given intelligence, an intuitive sense of justice or the law of right in conscience, his memory of experience of good and bad effects of actions, and his obser-

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vation of the experience of mankind in general, he has a great obligation laid upon him to both know and do the right.

A man's crimes against his brother man are punished by human laws professedly based upon justice and right. And since in the present imperfect state of human development human laws do not always mete our justice, God sees to it that in proportion to the heinousness of one's crime shall he suffer condemnation from his own conscience. This inner court of justice in the human mind makes no mistakes, and is always in session! No human culprit can impugn the justice of its decisions, for he is allowed to be his own advocate, and by the aid of memory manage his own case before its inexorable bar! He may freely urge every mitigating circumstance of good intent or of unintentional error. He may more truthfully than any other fix the shading of his guilt in proportion to the real turpitude of his wrong doing. But there can be no appeal from the sentence which this inner court of conscience finally pronounces. The lighter shades of error may be nearly effaced from memory by tears of repentance, but the dark stains of wilful crime death only can efface.

On the other hand the approval of an enlightened conscience is the approval of God Himself manifested in the human consciousness. But an enlightened conscience implies the co-operation of a sincere good heart or purpose, and an honest intelligent head or judgment. And to secure an enlightened conscience we must have an education in truth and right, beginning with good and intelligent parents, and continued by wider social influence for every individual.

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Every man and woman should be launched at mature years upon society furnished with a code of the purest moral and religious principles to guide his or her action in all the varied relations with society which life may develop.

Let us each and all cultivate in ourselves and in our children acquaintance with the God within us, the conscience which frowns or smiles upon us as we do wrong or right! The measure of our intimacy with God, the character of the principles which guide us, are shown by our daily life. If reason and love rule us, it will be revealed by acts of kindness, respect and consideration toward our fellowmen. Let us all live near to God, the fountain of all the varied good in the world, and our best friend.

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THE ELEMENTS OF A NOBLE CHARACTER.

If we could fashion a model or type of human character for the human race to imitate, would it not be a faint reflection of the character of the Power which exists above the human, with which every living thing upon this earth has relations?

Many think they have this type of perfect character in Jesus Christ. And some even believe him to be not only a perfect man, but God Himself, or One of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. As an honest examiner and searcher after truth, I would suggest that if it is desirable to have a model for human imitation it is necessary that such model be a type of perfection in all relations of life and for all the ages of man's existence. And it seems to me, with all due deference to the contrary opinions of good and learned divines, that Christ was not perfect, and cannot serve mankind as a universal model for all conditions and for all time. He did not fill out the measure of a man's days and was not placed in the various relations in which we are naturally placed in passing through life; he was not a married man, consequently he could not be a model for all husbands; he was not a father, so that in the paternal relation he could not serve us as a model.

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I believe that we find the law of human conduct in the revelation of the will of God as made in the laws which govern man's nature. It is becoming almost universally accepted as a fundamental truth, that obedience to the laws of the moral nature constitutes virtue, and confers the happiness which alone follows upon virtue. In other words, God has so constituted man that the performance of his highest duties, when actuated by the highest principles of his nature, secures to him the greatest amount of happiness possible to him in this world. To be virtuous from hour to hour and from year to year, is like receiving from Divine power and generosity a liberal salary paid constantly as we present our drafts upon the Bank of human happiness established by our Divine Father. We need spend no time in searching for the principal Bank, or headquarters of this divine institution for the diffusion of human happiness; for a branch establishment is set up in the conscience of each person, and all the claims to which we are entitled by virtuous conduct are at once cashed without discount. A good and virtuous human being never enquires "Is life worth living?" He lives happily from day to day. And when his hour of death arrives, he does not insist upon life eternal in a conscious happy state, or profess his belief in such immortality without due evidence; but with a grateful heart he thanks God that he has been permitted to exist at all; and with a genuine faith and confidence in the wisdom and love of his Creator he leaves the question of his immortality or annihilation to His wise and kind decision, willing that human will should be merged in Divine Will.

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A good and intelligent man is sincere, kind and charitable toward his fellows; not for the sake of any return from man, but because he feels he ought so to act, and because God has so constituted him that his own highest happiness and dignity are subserved by cultivating these virtuous actions.

We have the power to do good in the world, or to work evil. Shall we not make ourselves coadjutors with God, to work with Him to make ourselves and others good and noble, since he permits us so to carry out his kind intents? While God through and by His laws sustains all things, man is specially endowed with freedom and power to progress, to improve, to perfect, or to retard, corrupt and destroy. By obedience to the laws of God as shown in nature, and in natural human relations, we may co-operate with our Divine Father in doing good.

And if to make two blades of grass grow where only one has grown before is commendable, how much more so it is to discover and to exemplify and teach a virtue lost sight of or before unknown! Equally commendable is it to brighten up old and accepted virtues, and to place them in a better light, that they may appear more attractive.

That we may do this we should start from the central point of our advent into existence, and outline and consider our duties in these nearest relations of life; then justice and a fraternal feeling should be cultivated in an ever widening circle until we realize that all mankind are brothers, and we should be just and kind to all men everywhere. Each human being counts one, and we must be just toward ourselves as towards

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others; although sometimes in our varied relations with each other, the demand for justice toward ourselves must give way before the claims of some social duty. Yet should all sentiments of charity and generosity be under the control of a cultivated reason and balanced judgment.

Man in common with all other organized creatures on this earth is full of activities. Man cannot escape mental and physical desires and needs which shape these activities in differing ways. And the law of the correlation of forces is exemplified in the activities of every individual man. So also is the wisdom of the old saying "You can't have everything." People cannot be distinguished equally for opposite qualities or virtues. For instance one cannot at the same time exemplify the virtues and powers of the rashly generous, and of the saving and economical man. Character in its development forces all our activities and powers into harmony with the guiding principles of our nature. How wisely diversified are human ambitions and aims!

"Noblesse oblige" is the motto of the noble who in a conspicuous position of power and dignity feels that he must act in harmony with the grandeur of his opportunity. True nobility obliges any man set apart as richer, more intelligent, or more powerful in any way than his fellows, to act justly and kindly toward all other men. On the other hand no one can say that a humble life is not a noble life; it is merely a life whose nobleness has not been revealed by publicity. And no one can tell what undeveloped powers may be in the humblest man until some great crisis of personal or public experience tries

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him. We are born so to speak of a chemical combination of parental powers. Hence for our natural talents we are indebted to our parents. How important then it is for the children that their parents should make careful, intelligent choice of companions for life. How important that there should be harmony or fitness of character between the parents; and also such differentiation as shall result in a mental power and harmony in the child which did not fully exist in either parent! Above all there should be a principle of love and forbearance showing wisdom and goodness in both parents, to insure the best results in the children's characters. The children of such parents will rejoice in them, loving and respecting them all their days.

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JUSTICE.

To make up a fulness of character satisfying to ourselves we must keep alive in our minds the sense of justice to all mankind and to every living creature with whom we have relations. We should endeavor to imitate the disinterested kindness of our divine Father toward all human beings with whom we have relations: and toward all animals beneath us whom God has thus especially confided to our care. And in respect to kindness toward human beings; our wives, and our children, our parents, our brothers and sisters, and the nearest of kin to whom we are naturally bound by ties of affection, should stand first. If our means permit us to be charitable to any beyond this inner circle, if we have abundant means, we should embrace in our objects of charity the poor of the town and of the State in which we live. If we may increase still further our benefactions, our country as a whole stands nearer to us than any foreign country. In a sense our country stands to us, in remoter degree, in the same relation as that of our family. And the writer, acting upon this idea has always favored our own manufacturers by voting against the free introduction of goods made by the pauper labor of Europe. Believing that we should help ourselves first and keep our

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money in the United States. Reason and justice should guide us in all that we do whether acting as individuals or through governmental organizations.

Let it be the task of every religious organization, of every good man, to eliminate as fast as possible all the evil and injustice of the world from government and from society.

The highest and noblest motive that can actuate a man in unselfish efforts to make his fellow creatures happy, is simply that he ought to do so. And he ought to do so because the highest motive in life is to imitate the Divine Being in beneficence. Man so far from being naturally depraved is endowed with the power of thus imitating the Divine Father of all, and will do so when rightly developed in head and heart.

A man should be honest from a sense of duty, justice urging him to do what is right towards others. His own respect and dignity demand this of himself. And he has a right to expect equal justice toward himself from all those with whom he has relation. If in our estimation of any man we have entertained views of his character derogatory to him, which upon further knowledge we find to be erroneous, honor and justice compel us to openly and at once acknowledge our mistake in thus misjudging; and to recognize thereafter the better nature of him whom we before under-estimated. This principle of justice and honor should be held sacred by the intelligent of every community, in our social circles, as well as in our courts of justice.

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TRUTH.

A fact truly described, carefully defined with all its conditions, as it is the aim of a man of science to do, gives us a truth.

Truth is deduced by the human mind from the facts of life and experience, through study and reflection. The acquisitions of the individual mind can thus by the aid of philosophy be poured into the common reservoirs of human knowledge. And it is a wise and beautiful provision of human nature that to impart knowledge gives to the imparting mind a peculiar intellectual pleasure. To work out through the laboratory of the human mind a single truth, a single principle, not before discovered or fully appreciated by the world, raises the individual in his own estimation, and gives him great happiness. Whether this be a physical, moral or religious truth, it is all the same in its effect upon him who has deduced it: his satisfaction is measured only by the importance to the well being of humanity of the idea or principle he has contributed to the common mind. But let us not forget that the intelligent good man who works for the advancement of truth represents a Higher Power who is the source of all truth.

Truth should be shared freely. It should be held in common like the atmosphere. It should be as cheap as a glass of

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water and given as readily and as courteously. Especially should all who are professional teachers and ministers give all the truth in their possession with the utmost sincerity. If in our day such teachers and ministers do not perceive all of truth, many do more or less clearly see the errors and falsities of the religious system in which most of us have been educated. Our convictions should be built up by honest and profound reflection on known experiences. And to arrive at legitimate convictions of religious and moral truths, the human mind must be guided by reason through the portals of doubt. It must sift and winnow the chaffy piles of ignorance and error which have accumulated through the past ages. Doing this earnestly and faithfully, even the ordinary mind will be rewarded with some valuable findings. Truth is coy and must be searched for as the diamond is sought by the patient miner. And when it is found and polished, this jewel of truth should not be confined to the private casket of one's own mind. It should be brought forth into the light where it may sparkle and shine for the satisfaction and benefit of all mankind!

Great truths are important for the well being of man, and great errors work evil to mankind. Since truth and error thus greatly influence human action for good or for evil, let us all endeavor to enlarge the object-glasses of our minds that we may more clearly perceive the use and beauty of truth, and the harmfulness and ugliness of error.

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FAITH.

Faith,— Belief,— Convictions. Faith and belief should harmonize with convictions built upon reflection from known experiences. There is thus a difference in my mind between beliefs and convictions. Since there is so much ignorance yet in the world, doubt is for the mature mind a virtue. For doubt may be a forerunner of a greater intelligence. Doubt of received beliefs spurs to examination, and true convictions must be built up step by step in our minds by individual reason. And when convictions are thus carefully formed they are likely to be permanent.

The idea that one must have faith in any system of religion or code of morals which violates reason and common sense, is a libel upon the dignity of man and the beneficence of God!

In this as in all other departments of human activity we should carefully study, each one for himself, the great underlying principles of education, of sociology, of government, and of all scientific truth. The prevailing tone of intelligent minds in our day tends towards "liberalism," or a breaking away from the old-time faith of the churches. But as yet no new system of faith has been crystallized from this tendency. The underlying truth of all religions has not yet been spoken.

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Individuals are therefore especially justified in presenting each his own view of our relations to God and to our fellow men, as I am now seeking to do.

Faith is an important element in the system of Religion advocated by this writer. A knowledge of the real character of God as shown in all his relations with man inspires a living faith, the most perfect, that God is wise and good, and the best friend, and in a sense the *only* friend each and all of us possess, since he is behind our life, our parents, near and dear relatives, all our friends, and pleasant acquaintances. None of these blessings are of man's invention; all these precious gifts were conceived and made possible to us by a high Power existing before the advent of man upon this planet. Our nearest and dearest objects of love and esteem act only as agents of our Divine Father. We all should have perfect faith and reliance in the wisdom and goodness of God. On the panel of a door in the Bell St. Chapel, that the writer has erected in his native city, is the following Sentiment "Fear not Death! the same wise and beneficent Power that gave you *Life*, presides equally at your *Death!* Trust in God!" Now since the gift of Life has been attended with so much happiness, it is not reasonable to suppose that Death coming from the same wise and beneficent hand will be a great misfortune. We ought to have faith and trust in our Divine Father, that if after having enjoyed the beautiful drama of life the curtain should fall and unconsciousness should be our lot, then unconsciousness will be the best for us; for we must have faith to believe that God in His Providence cannot act contrary to the

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harmony of His own character. In any event the *Race* of Man is immortal, and whether our hopes of individual consciousness after death are well founded or not, we are permitted to cherish to our latest moment such hopes as give us the greatest pleasure to exercise. Faith means reliance and confidence; it is early developed in childhood and even in babyhood, and is constantly exercised through life on something worthy or unworthy. Faith may be founded on experience, or it may be established by reliance and confidence in the views and beliefs of our parents, and the teachings of our ministers. The confidence, reliance and *faith* of the child are early developed and intuitively placed upon its mother. And a man or woman through his own consciousness of his own honesty, of his own sincere endeavor to do right, has faith in human goodness. Faith and confidence he must have; he cannot live without them.

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HOPE.

What is Hope? It is a divine spur given to the human mind to enable it to achieve the ends and aims of its natural activity. Hope is a servant of all work, it will aid in the accomplishment of any enterprise good or bad. It is like a cheering cordial, it will give strength for any work the mind directs. In all good work it may be likened to God's smile of encouragement.

In this life as soon as a dear babe appears all is future in the parents thought. Hope at once paints for these loving parents a bright future for the child. And the child very soon begins to hope for his own future. Hope is thus the cheerful optimistic companion of our future life. The past is dead, and cannot be lived over again. But the future already lives in us through Hope. How precious is this Hope, to the poor and miserable perhaps more so than to the rich and happy.

Hope is a brilliant beautiful gift from God our Divine Father! Hope shines within us by its own light like a divine smile of encouragement when all without seems dark and gloomy. Hope is the sister of Faith and Confidence, and the parent of cheerfulness and content of mind. But there are other monitorial qualities of the human mind to which Hope itself should defer. Hope like a gay volatile child must be

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kept in hand by reason and the knowledge gained from experience, or she will come to grief in her capricious wanderings. For it is well known to us all that nothing is so uncertain of fruition as human hopes.

Parents hope that their children may grow up strong and healthy and that they may be good and prosperous. They desire that their children may be just and kind to others and be treated by all who are related to them with justice and kindness. And the sentiment of protecting love which accompanies this hope in the minds of the parents leads them to seek the fruition of these hopes by all unselfish devotion to the well being of their children. Good parents seek to make their children happy by education, by moral and religious instruction, by giving them the best which they themselves know.

How base it is to excite groundless hopes or fears in the minds of any, especially children! And ministers should look well to the grounds justifying their excitements of hopes and fears respecting a future life beyond this world.

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HUMOR.

Humor is the funny little sister of Cheerfulness, and the first cousin to Hope; and the three are often found in company.

We mortals exercise Humor when things go rightly, and especially when we find imperfections and errors in others which we felicitate ourselves we do not show. There is a little spice of superiority felt when we laugh at the antics of a cat or a monkey, the frolics of a lamb, or the odd movements of a calf or a cow. And we may feel with this a benevolent satisfaction at the pleasure and happiness the lower animals feel as indicated by their funny movements. The pith of all humor as it relates to our fellow-men lies in our observation of their little errors and oddities. These seem to us fine settings to show off our own superior intelligence or information! Satire and ridicule often become criminal excesses of the divine gift of humor.

Nobody likes to be laughed at. And although the innocent, well-meaning, good-natured, moderate exercise of the faculty of humor, directed toward human weakness and oddities, indicates a higher intelligence and has a reforming tendency, it becomes vicious and ugly when heartless and scoffing. Such ridicule as some unbelievers manifest toward the honest beliefs of sincere Christians is of that unkind nature.

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CHARITY.

God never aids any man except through his own exertions. Therefore we should not help those who can help themselves; for if we did so we should contravene God's law of self-reliance in the development of character. Individual industry and economy bring honest accumulations. We may often injure rather than benefit ill-chosen objects of charity. I think our rule should be to consider our natural relations with our fellow-beings in exercising charity. First help our parents when help is needed. Next to God each man should devote himself to his Mother, whose constant and disinterested love he can never requite.

Next, a man should be a blessing to his father, sisters, brothers, aunts and poor nieces: uncles and nephews should take care of themselves. Then come friends and neighbors; help these in charity after much reflection. As a rule of life never endorse the notes of anybody. There are occasionally cases where it is well to loan small sums to help into business deserving young men. But such loans should be based strictly upon the capability and the character of the person to be assisted; and we must remember that as a rule the men who

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succeed best in business are those who begin unassisted on their own peanut stands, and with honesty, capacity, politeness, economy and a good personal character build up their own fortunes.

Are there those who have a just claim upon full charity from those who have a sufficiency of means? Certainly; there are young children, there are the insane, the sick, the widows and orphans and all who are unable to work for their own support. These must be helped by others through the pity and kindness which God has implanted in the human heart. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you in like circumstances is a God-like command. Charity is a quality more noble even than justice; and its exercise is not only a duty, it is a high privilege. But charity requires for its exercise not only a feeling heart, but wisdom and discrimination, and few are really competent for the work.

There is a class of lazy communists who think it would be just for the industrious people to share with them their hard-earned savings. 'By what right,' these ask, 'can any man accumulate the wealth which poor people need?' 'By what principle of justice,' demands the communist, 'does any man exact interest for the money which he ought to lend to any one who needs it?'

I would ask in reply; 'why should we help others in opposition to the universal law of self-reliance? Does the true principle of charity demand of us material sacrifices for the support of others able to help themselves, when we have earned our living by our own exertions and self-sacrifice?

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What claim have others upon the fruits of labors they have not shared?'

All must admit the claims of children to be well born and reared. And all admit it to be the duty of the male bread-winner to provide for the wife who gives him her love and her confidence and who aids him by her prudent management of the home while they both care for the children. And all children must admit the claim of their parents upon them for care whenever needed. And for all who are related to us, in the measure of the intimacy of the relation, we should be helpful: and to all who truly need and cannot do for themselves we should manifest that charitable spirit which is an imitation of the Divine beneficence.

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ANIMALS.

Man as compared with lower grades of animals is greatly superior in intelligence; all animals with whom he has relations are subordinated to him. His mental acumen in defense and attack are more than a match for their greater physical strength. In the early periods of the earth's existence, when it was covered with nutritious vegetation, animal monstrosities abounded whose instinct for killing each other subserved God's intent of enriching the surface of the earth for man's use. And man has done his part in co-operating with God, since his advent upon the earth, in exterminating the venomous and harmful members of the animal kingdom. This is all right. But let us never hurt or destroy such as can be made useful by domestication. And let us remember that the lower animals are specially under our protection as they are under our control.

To honor God is to respond to the confidence he has placed in us in respect to the comfort and well-being of animals by always showing kindness to them. All domestic animals are given to man to serve his comfort and varied uses. But thoughtless and cruel is the man or boy who would wantonly kill or hurt a horse, a dog, a cat, or a bird! There is danger

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that such a one would in case of provocation or anger hurt a weak confiding child. Animals which we domesticate are like children confided to the reasonable and kind care of man. And God having so confided them has left the poor brutes dumb to protest against any wrongs. If a horse is lashed, kicked or maimed all he can do is to suffer, his humid eyes meekly regarding his cruel master! But if man fails in the duty of kindness to animals confided so fully to him by God, society should care for what the individual is cruel enough or thoughtless enough to neglect or ill-treat. There should be stringent laws against and adequate punishment for all wrong-doing by cruel human animals towards our dumb friends. There is nothing which more excites my anger than to see a man abuse or cruelly treat a dumb beast!

The domesticated animal is helpless and innocent as a child. He is created submissive and gentle towards man that he may serve him, and how base and wicked is it to abuse that humble gentleness.

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SOCIAL REFORMS.

TEMPERANCE.

Let us not license errors and crimes. No criminal habit should receive the right of protected existence through our social laws, or the countenance of individual sanction; hence the laws licensing rum-shops and brothels are unjustifiable and should be condemned. All voting citizens who make such laws are responsible in a degree for the crimes and misery which result from liquor selling and licentiousness. And the money received into a State or City treasury from such license laws is blood-money, wrung from the miserable drunkard and his unhappy family. Let us never forget that the power accorded to man by God to do wrong does not comprise the right to do wrong. The principle of justice as applied to all is higher than the power of free action. And as we have no right to injure another, so have we no right to injure ourselves. Justice to all comprises justice each to his own self. And the natural penalty or consequence of suffering attached to vicious habits does not, when suffered, justify or atone for the wrong-doing.

Man-kind is a solidarity, and what injures one injures all: hence our laws should be such as will insure the well-being of each and of all in the community.

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*THE CONSTITUTIONAL LIQUOR AMENDMENT.

Human laws are not made for those who by their own good principles regulate themselves. There may be too much law already for them. But there is often a deficiency of law, or of just enforcement of law, for the unprincipled and disorderly element in society. Look at our prohibitory liquor laws! How often the venality of judges or attorneys and the inefficiency of the constabulary prevent their execution. And the sectarian spirit in the churches, which prevents good men and women within their fold from co-operating with good men and women outside in abating the infamous liquor traffic, aids the evil cause. The writer of this believes in the existence of a God wise and good in character, and believes that the smile of that God of Wisdom and Justice would be felt in the hearts of all who at this crisis would lend a helping hand and a favorable vote to the passage of the constitutional amendment against the liquor traffic! Christians may do well to pass their lives in prayer and constant efforts to save their own souls. But surely God would forgive at this time a little disinterested effort on their part to save the souls of others! And it ought to be a principle with us all to seek to prevent evil in the community as well as in ourselves.

* Written at the time such an amendment was submitted to the people of Rhode Island.

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CONCERNING CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS.

Under the holy bonds of Matrimony we invite our children to exist. God has implanted in human nature, as in all the grades of being below man, the instincts or qualities we term passions, affection and love. He may be vicious or virtuous in the use of these powers as he elects. Man has the power to degrade his body and mind or to beautify and elevate them. But his constitutional qualities inhere, and he can never dislodge himself from the primal instincts in which God Himself has manifested His divine law. Man may govern by enlightened reason his affections, his pursuits and his passions; But he can never eradicate them. And no mother can crush out the inherent affection for her children which is implanted in her heart, any more than she can wilfully prevent the circulation of her blood.

Every child has a natural right to be born under happy circumstances, and none but healthy and mutually harmoniously constituted parents should dare invite a child into existence. Every child has a right to possess a good healthy constitution. Hence it is a crime for people to marry and bring children into the world when afflicted with consumption, scrofula or any disease which may be entailed upon offspring. To invite a child to exist under such conditions is to do an injustice to the

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child itself and to society at large. And the punishment for this crime is speedily felt by the parents themselves, as their natural affections are wounded by the sight of a sickly badly constituted child, whose sufferings they share in sympathy, and to whom they must give much time and money for nursing and care. Such parents often ask the time and sympathy of relatives and friends in their affliction. But I think we should be economical of our sympathy to the parents themselves, for they are criminals and to be condemned in this matter. As to the poor suffering children, they should be helped in all possible ways, for they are innocent and wronged victims. If such poorly constituted children die young we should not mourn, for neither God nor a sensible man thinks it best that the race of man should be composed of poor imperfectly constituted men and women who in their turn might propagate their kind. It is for man to use his freedom and will in all wisdom in regard to the existence and perpetuation of the race. God shows his own wisdom and love in the law which places no limit to human progress toward perfection, but does place a limit to man's physical and mental deterioration.

Children lacking beyond a certain point in either physical or mental power must either die or be without capacity to perpetuate their infirmities. All human beings must come up to at least the minimum requirements of God's law. The greatest value of life depends upon a healthy constitution free from taints of hereditary disease. And parents should never forget that constitutional conditions are fixed by the parents and more remote ancestry. And this thought should lead

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them to exercise reason and obey the law of right in all things.

Perhaps few, if any, are the cases in which the birth of a human being may not prove in some sense a blessing to itself. Still there seem to be thousands of human beings who ought never to have been born. And the sovereign will-power of individuals is responsible in all such cases for the births and attendant miseries. How absurd then is the saying that "God never sends mouths without sending food to fill them." God never sends any mouths at all! Mouths are introduced into the world by men and women, and they alone are responsible for the filling of those mouths. For the most part our poor-houses are crowded with people who should never have been introduced into the world. What folly is it, how unreasonable, how morally wrong, for a poor couple in unfortunate conditions of life, without means to properly feed themselves, to send out invitations to children who come smilingly to partake of a feast of life only to find a famine! Such persons commit a wrong upon society nearly akin to theft; for since civilized society has a law that no one must be allowed to starve, the kith and kin, and often society at large, are called upon to provide for the children bidden by these thoughtless parents to a poverty-stricken board. I say bidden by thoughtless parents, for God had no voice in the calling! And charity is obliged to make forced drafts upon the labor and resources of others to care for those thus made dependent at birth. We have to open alms-houses and soup kitchens, establish fuel societies and hold charity fairs to meet this demand. And our benevo-

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lent ladies of leisure go about from house to house to persuade all to contribute "for sweet charity's sake" to the support of these dependent ones. And such charity has certainly its dark side; for it tends to make pauperism a fixed quantity in society. And in some way people should be taught that it is wrong to bring children into the world whom they cannot support, and then make those who have been provident and just in their own lives "stand and deliver" for charity's sake, enough to keep their families.

The Divine Power does not hesitate through the agency of His laws to shorten the lives of men, women and children for infractions of them. God's *Will* is disregarded by our disobeying these laws. These laws are easily understood, and if we would live long and happily we *must* obey them! Otherwise disobey! and take your chances of vanishing from the world's surface. But in fact, knowing the existence of these laws and the effects of disobeying them, and having the power and the liberty to act in obedience or disobedience, it is man himself who foolishly courts death. Constant care, constant vigilance, is the price we pay for the privilege of staying in this beautiful world! Women are perhaps a little more favored than men in respect to safety and length of life, because women are naturally more timid and careful; by a just dispensation, Nature places the strongest safeguards to protect beings whose lives are the most precious! In infancy and in fact all the way through life, a man estimates his mother a trifle higher than he estimates his father, without however derogating from the high estimation in which he holds the

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latter. Mothers, sisters, wives and daughters are never drafted and sent out to fight in wars. God bless their natural carefulness and timidity which spares them, and saves man from the terrible sacrifice which a strong animal courage in women would entail upon him.

The husband and father of a family in America is the one that wife and daughter as a rule look up to for the material supplies of the family. This disposition in the male of our race to work for those we love, furthers the will of God, for as a rule it is implanted by God in the mind of man and cannot be eliminated by human will. But all men are not gifted equally with a constitutional power to win easily bread for their families. Some have been poorly constituted by their parents, and were badly conditioned in mind and body at birth, as perhaps were their parents when they were born. The laws of Heredity should therefore be studied and followed that it may become easier for all to do right and to meet all the obligations of life.

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EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

Children not only have a right to be well born, but to be well brought up; to be kept abreast of the best development of their time in all things. If parents plant truth in the minds of their children it will be accepted in loving confidence, as coming from their earliest and best friends. And if error is planted, and prejudice, they will be imbibed with equal confidence. And in after life it will prove exceedingly difficult to uproot either the one or the other. How easy is it to trace many errors and mistakes of after life to false or mistaken instruction in childhood!

Parents are the natural guardians and instructors of their children, and to teach all the truth they have perceived is to perform a high duty. In that way they obey the law established in the beautiful parental relation. Parents are thus enabled to give their children the benefit of their own experience and share with them their convictions of right and wrong. Thus religious beliefs are perpetuated by being handed down from parents to children, and if a parent teaches the best he knows to his child he will feel the satisfaction of a good conscience, whether he be Christian, Mahomedan, or believer in any other religion.

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It is hard upon the children, therefore, when the parent is an Agnostic or Atheist. For then when the child asks "Is there a God?" The parent replies "I know of none, I perceive none. I perceive causes and effects, and I perceive laws which apparently operate by their own power. I perceive that every animal, plant, and part of nature has power within itself of adaptation to outward conditions. I see no need of a Power outside this force of evolution to create and care for all things."

But Atheists cannot escape the happy influences which an intelligent and good God daily showers upon them. It would seem that the Atheist and Agnostic must know that from *some* Power, not his own, the Sun shines, the law of gravity holds him kindly to the earth, that he may be comfortable and happy in his relations with his fellow creatures, with his valued mother, his wife and his children, and that he may enjoy all the precious affections growing out of these relations. And though no one is competent to describe God in His fulness of perfection, no child need go beyond the beautiful family relation itself, into which he is born, to find a love and disinterestedness which are a revelation of God. For kind and loving parents are the agents and representatives of our Divine Father. They express His will and character in their loving care of their children. And how happy are parents, not only of the human race but throughout all organized existence, in the performance of their duties, in loving protection and care of off-spring. The she-bear tenderly suckles her cubs, and even the venomous serpent has regard for her young.

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There is a saying "There is nothing perfect but a mother's first baby." How beautiful are the ordainments of our Divine Father in his relations with human beings! God, although to our comprehension a positive unchangeable Will in regard to the laws of nature, is yet most considerate and delicate in regard to ourselves in the process of their execution. How often our Divine Father hides his own master hand, that we may cherish the dignifying thought that it is our little human will that governs us. And from the lowest orders of existence up to man and woman who are the master spirits of the earth, the great divine law of love of off-spring prevails! God has thus made the performance of their duties, and the exercise of needed affection toward their children, the greatest happiness to parents. And since we are thus the agents of God in the care and instruction of our children, investigation respecting the truth or falsity of our opinions is always in order, that we may be sure we are giving our children the most knowledge we are capable of acquiring. Ignorance and superstition are mental diseases which should not, any more than bodily disorders be allowed to taint our children.

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SECTION THIRD.

RELIGIONS OF THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

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RELIGIONS OF THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

SYSTEMS OF RELIGION.

Every intelligent conscious human being requires and must have a religion!

Religions that have at any time existed, have been established by man's own free will and influence. The philosopher may observe that the rationality in the creeds of every religion of every age has corresponded to the degree of general intelligence existing in the human mind at the time of their adoption. Man himself, acting individually and collectively, has instituted every religion that ever existed or that now exists! And the creed, belief, and general character of each and every religion corresponds with the supposed character of God, and the supposed nature of man's relation to God, at the time of its adoption. God being invisible to our senses the human mind has idealized Him in various forms and symbols. Knowing nothing superior to man either in body or mind, God has been idealized as a man. And as a visible object of worship the sun has for long periods of time been adored as God, or as the symbol and manifestation of God.

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If this world is not still in its infancy, at least it is not beyond the early period of its adolescence. And the old nurse of the world seems to have been the ugly hag Superstition! The so-called religions of the world, even of the more civilized parts, seem to be based not so much upon the intelligence of men as upon their ignorance.

Human thoughts like the birds of the air are permitted by God to soar everywhere!

Using the precious privilege, freedom of thinking, let us examine sincerely and freely the grounds of all old beliefs and judge for ourselves of their value. God in giving us the power to reflect and examine, intended we should fearlessly use that power. Let us begin if necessary, by doubting our inherited faiths, and let us proceed to build up our own convictions by the aid of reason and study until we have fixed principles of belief in our minds; this will lead to contentment and happiness. We find ourselves on arriving at the age of independence of thought to be what we are by inheritance. As children we naturally conform to the belief concerning the character of God, His laws and our relation to Him, which our parents hold and assure us is the simple solemn truth. It is next to impossible that there should be any dissonance between parents and children in these matters of belief. We are all born into religion, as we are into all the other conditions and faculties which grade us in creation. It is the will of God that mankind universally should be born into the love and affection of their parents, rather than into any especial faith and belief in regard to Himself. He has left man

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the liberty and privilege to perpetuate his own errors and idiosyncrasies in his children. And He relies upon Mahometans, Jews, Chinese, Indians and Christians alike, to give sincerely to their children the best material and mental food they can command in all unselfish kindness. And that is just what is being done to-day in our world, has always been done, and will continue to be until the end of time. God will not interfere either to eradicate human errors or to increase human knowledge, save by and through the operation of laws fixed in the constitution of things. To man's more or less evolved intelligence at every given period of human growth, is left the ascertainment and teaching of religious as of other truths. To the power and extent of man's liberty and will everything good and desirable in the way of knowledge can be obtained. We should not therefore degrade our intelligence and dignity by praying for that which we may get only through our own exertions, as individuals, and as a race of beings.

Great advances have been made in physical science. Our general comfort and well being are increasing through labor-saving inventions. Wonderful discoveries have been made by the human intellect. And we are justified in hoping that in time, man by means of these advances in physical science may attain to the leisure of the grazing animals in the field to whom God has not given the power to make mistakes! Our attainments in the line of religion and morals do not correspond with those made in the physical sphere. And yet the highest happiness and well being of man depend more upon his religious and moral progress than upon the mechanical arts which

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give us leisure, food and raiment. The needs of the mind are greater than the needs of the body.

To ascertain and perform our religious and moral duties will most of all conduce to our well-being and happiness in this world. But evolution is slow, and it may be many ages before the mind of man will clearly recognize his true relations with God and with his fellow creatures. When that time arrives, and our minds so approximate in intelligence and in goodness to the Divine, the millenium will appear. But in the meantime is there no happiness of truth, apprehension, and of right-doing, for man? Most certainly there is joy and increasing well being at every point of progress, as we march individually and collectively towards our goal of perfection.

The prevailing faith of one period of time has been rejected by the succeeding one, but in these changes there have been no abrupt transitions. One faith or system of religion has gradually dissolved into another like Daguerre's dissolving views!

Owing to the slowness of growth, and the often blurred views of religious matters which these changes give, it is hard for a young person often to know what to believe. Such should remember that true faith is born of real convictions, and that convictions of truths are always built up by patient investigation each one for himself. One should reflect as profoundly as possible upon the facts of life and history, add to these his own experience, and exercise his reason and common sense as in all other things.

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LEADERS OF THOUGHT.

As some trees in a forest dominate others in height and wide extent of branches, so in every age of the world there are a few men who rise in intellectual power above the masses and become conspicuous in various lines of thought and effort. The love of truth is stronger in these men than in the average of mankind, and they therefore seek with earnestness to winnow truth from the inherited errors of superstition. The leaders and advocates of any prevailing religion are strong in the power of organization. And this makes it difficult for any to doubt accepted theories, however superstitious, and renders it almost impossible for young persons to break away from the prevailing form of religious faith. But intelligent and honest investigators of strong mind doubt, as they must, and lead the way to transitions of growth. Philosophy and scientific truth are the results of mental research and knowledge of ascertained facts. Hence truths of science underlie and are combined with true religion. Religion as I interpret it, is the performance of all duties growing out of our relations with God. And morality comprises all of duty growing out of our relations with our fellow creatures: and in the term fellow creatures should be comprised all animals.

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All true legitimate religion in the sense in which I have here used the word, must be acknowledged and endorsed by an intelligent philosophy, and must harmonize with all ascertained scientific truths. Unless this harmony with the most enlightened reason is secured, religion will always become not a true but a spurious system of faith, based upon ignorance and filled with superstition and leading to false notions of God and of Duty. The source of growth in religion, and the tests of its beauty and its use are in the intelligent mind and heart of the human race.

Religious sentiments should be based upon the noblest traits of human character; such as unselfishness, justice, charity, love of truth, honor in its true sense, and the whole train of real virtues. Our children should be trained to exercise every magnanimous sentiment and to be guided by such early in life. We should form the minds of our children; train them up as you would a young plant to the observance of the best we ourselves know. If parents themselves in their own character and daily life could furnish perfect models for their children, what an easy task it would be to form the young in resemblance to their own nobility! In that case parents might see their own virtues budding in the tender minds and hearts of their offspring; for children are easy imitators and are early looking about for models of action. How beautiful to the reflecting mind are the family relations instituted by a presiding Power in nature. We honor ourselves in calling this Power "Divine Father." In all matters pertaining to religion and morality therefore it should be made an easy task by our

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religious teachers for parents to instill into the tender receptive minds of their children true ideas of the character of God, of our relations to Him, and of our duties to each other. And when the true leaders of advanced thought shall have fully impressed a better than the prevailing religious belief upon the thought of the masses of mankind, this will be the case.

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THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION; ITS TRUTHS AND ITS ERRORS.

In the heterogeneous compilations of the Christian scriptures were laid down truths and fictions, realities and imaginary conceptions! In them are contained statements of principles conforming to the best modern view of our true relations with some wise and good Power above the human, and statements also which are like night-mare experiences and violate every sentiment of nobility and justice which has been implanted in the constitution of man by the same great Power above the human. The history of Christianity, like the history of Mahometanism or Buddhism, is the history of the good effects of the teaching of truth, and of the bad effects of the teaching of terrible errors as well; a teaching of errors which, perpetuated by powerful organizations, persists to this day!

Slow as are the geologic changes of the earth seem to be the mental changes of man! Powerful organizations like the one gathered and perpetuated by the Christian religion, have accompanied every religious system. And these organizations by means of revivals, "awakenings" at favorable times, as during the depressed conditions following cyclones, earth-

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quakes, inundations, deaths and financial crises, retain allegiance and procure new converts to the prevailing system of belief long after the most intelligent of the period have discarded its dogmas. At such times of revivals, churches are refilled and prosperous, legacies and bequests pour in from the sick and dying, and a new lease of life is given even to the most ancient and out-grown faith. All these awakenings and revivals are brought about by the enthusiasm fomented from ignorance and blind superstitious beliefs.

When the Roman Catholic Church was at the height of its power, it was not safe for doubters, or those leaders of thought who first defined the next step of progress, to think aloud. For freedom of speech in those times meant punishment by faggot and torture. The life of the intelligent thinker who ventured to criticise the prevailing religious views was jeopardized, the comfort of his family destroyed, and all the interests of his friends compromised. In those days it seemed to be too great a sacrifice for any honest philosophic thinker to risk the penalty of sincere speech. But some noble men did take those risks, and received their martyrdom. What horrible monsters are Ignorance, Superstition and Bigotry! By the efforts of these lovers and seekers of truth we have reached a stage when no religious organization amongst us can forbid freedom of speech or check independent thought.

But in our own day the systems of theology bar out the masses by the onorous unreasonable conditions which they annex to discipleship. Belief in repulsive dogmas, and in a special order of ceremonies, is still demanded of those who would

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become members of the Church, which in our land means the Christian Church. And preachers do not ask us to study the grounds of the belief which they press upon our acceptance. Their tone is still imperative. Even the Unitarians, the most advanced of all the sects of Christendom, ask all of us in the Constitution of their National Conference to recognize the kingship of Jesus.

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SAINTS AND SINNERS.

There are some honest but timid people, with a strong and earnest faith, who conceive the character of God to be precisely that which has been handed down by the forefathers and the traditions of the church. These are the devotees of the Christian system of religion. And as the Jews believed themselves to be the chosen people of their God, so do Christians who possess sincere faith in Orthodox Christianity believe that all persons adopting their belief as found in the Bible and as written in the Church creeds, are the chosen people of God, to be especially favored after death. Thus the old Jewish idea of favoritism in God is perpetuated in Christianity. This idea of being the eternally favored proteges of Divine Power must be very soothing and satisfying to Christians. They preach and believe apparently, that the "dead in Christ" rise first at the Judgment Day and go straight to heaven, thus securing of course the most eligible mansions! It seems to me that selfishness is thus made a striking characteristic of the Christian system of religion. To represent God as partial in His beneficence to those who have accepted a special

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form of belief, while honest and good men and women who accept another as more consistent with their reason are punished by Him, is to represent an unreasonable being, and to cultivate selfish feelings in those who consider themselves His favorites!

In the estimation of most Christians it seems to make no difference whether a person leads a moral life, performing all his duties in the family relation, being honest and just in all his transactions with the world, or not. He cannot go to heaven or receive any rewards for his right actions unless he joins the church of Christ! The people whom the Church calls "sinners" whether they are moral or immoral, came into the world innocently accepting the invitations of their parents to appear; a summons peremptory and impossible to resist! And by whose power did they exist? Ultimately by the power of the Author of all life in the Universe. Now in this world, among men, we look for the exercise of justice in our relations one with another, and as a rule there is among the men highest in power and intelligence a law of honor, "noblesse oblige," the obligation to be both just and generous toward the poorer and weaker of their kind. Have not, I would ask, poor dependent mortals a right to expect as much justice and consideration from God as from their fellow creatures? I submit to the reason and good sense of Christians if there should not be a law of justice towards all born into the world through Divine Power; an equal chance for every human guest invited to the feast of life? Christians as a rule by the exercise of good habits, by thrift, a fair degree of morality, and a high

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degree of poetical enjoyment through excited hopes of Heaven and the cheering belief that they are the favorites of God, attain social position and live happily in this world. On the other hand many a sinful vagabond, born of imperfectly constituted or intemperate parents, summoned into the world by an invitation he was forced to accept, born with bodily and mental infirmities, uneducated, growing up in degradation, intemperate himself, miserable in health, avoided by all respectable people, is pushed by poverty, steals or murders, and is condemned, imprisoned and hung. And where does he go after death? Of course according to the Creed, he goes to hell. Is not hell, some would say, the only fit place for such as he? And, as Carlyle would say, "he is lucky to have a hell to go to."

But would not a just God, who rules and guides all things, whose Providence is over all human events, see to it that such a poor miserable sinner had something in another world to compensate him for the miseries of this one? If *one* has a claim upon the Divine Father, surely *all* of his children have an equal claim. A just God must be impartial toward all. And justice would seem to indicate that those who received the worst possible conditions here, should be given a better chance hereafter; while for the good and happy in this life a taste of misery in the next would only equalize things!

These selfish views of God's favoritism and partiality must pass away. And in fact the religious atmosphere is being gradually cleansed in civilized countries of every faith. We must credit Christianity itself with furnishing the first pio-

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neers in this work. When the Protestants split themselves off from the Catholic Church, they began the work of purifying the Christian system; and by splitting themselves further into sects, and adopting various shades of opinion, and differing creeds, they have continued the work of disintegration and also of purification. Yet it is true, to my thought, that all these various shades of Christian belief have in them pessimistic and false ideas of God and of man. The Universalists were noble pioneers in pushing religion upwards from the depths of superstition to the light of reason; for they discarded "hell," the corner stone of fear in the Christian system while holding on to "heaven" the other corner stone of hope. But the Universalists retained other and less desirable elements of Christianity. Then came Unitarianism with its noble pioneer, Dr. Channing. Unitarianism was at first simply an attempt to bind the three Gods of the Christian system into one. It has now become a broader movement slowly working towards freedom of thought in religion. And while the Eastern or more conservative branch of Unitarianism adheres to the Divine kingship of Jesus, and makes much of its belief in the doctrine of personal immortality, the Western branch, with talented leaders, are way ahead of these and profess nothing but "freedom, fellowship and character in religion." To my thought the Western Unitarians have carried individualism to an excess. Individualism must prevail where there are no guiding principles, to influence the mind of man collectively. But if to be religious, means to perform all the duties growing out of our relations with God we can-

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not consistently ignore in our thought, or in our profession, the existence of God. All religion and all religious duties grow out of our relations with God ; hence to ignore His existence would be in my opinion to deprive the words "character in religion" of definite meaning. I believe that all religious sentiments and all religious duties grow out of man's relations with his Divine Father. We have the mental power to reasonably idealize this Divine Father, and we are therefore justified in believing that man, to whom God has given these powers of mind, has been placed on this earth and wisely fitted to dominate all other animals, and in time to conquer all forces of nature; and is therefore specially worthy of dignifying himself by calling the great High Power to whom he owes existence his "Divine Father." We may properly claim a nearer kinship to God than can any other existence on the globe, by virtue of our intellectual power and the superior intelligence with which we are endowed. Even the Atheist and Agnostic admit that from some power existing antecedent to our own existence we have received life and all the happiness and possibilities of happiness which human life implies. The honest man of science, determined if possible, come what may, to ascertain the real nature and inward truth of things, takes his powerful magnifying telescope, and looks over and under and around the sun and stars and discovers no God like the One of whom so much has been spoken and written. No Brobdingnagian personal God presents himself to his senses, which are his honest and truthful body and mind servants faithfully portraying everything visible in nature. The man

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of science sees nothing in his search but vast globes of organized matter and the thin air of space. "Where" he asks "is your personal God, whom you insist we should all love and worship? Let us first find him and then we can better decide about the worship due him. I see nothing but nature" he says. "I recognize a persistent force. I recognize evolution, adaptation, unchangeable laws and principles! I recognize evil in the world. Nature is beautiful and nature is also hideous. If your God is wise and beneficent, why is it that the cruel and the hideous exist in nature? If all animals are irresponsible and innocent, why are they constituted so that they prey upon and devour each other? By what principle of justice has organized existence been created so that the stronger shall always destroy and oppress the weaker? If life is good, why is death, which is bad, allowed to supervene and destroy it? Why, as Mr. Ingersoll asks, has not health been made catching instead of disease?"

Such questions as these are often put by men of intelligence and by those who have themselves attained a respectable and influential position in society. They seem to feel with Bolingbroke that had they been at the Almighty's shoulders when the world was created, they might have given him some valuable hints towards the improvement of the constitution of things! Now fortunately our Heavenly Father is not of an irascible disposition or such critics might be punished for their audacity. As it is they are left to enjoy life and all the blessings of an existence they criticise, as fully as if they were only grateful for those blessings.

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But pleasantry apart, all the questions put by thoughtful men, all the criticisms such men make upon the character of God and the constitution of nature, should be considered and replied to if possible by those who believe in the existence of a wise and beneficent God who "doeth all things well." By virtue of the liberty with which we are endowed we have a right to criticise and to inquire freely concerning God and His Providence.

I hold firmly the belief in the wisdom and kindness of God, but I hold it to be utterly impossible that the system of religion known as Christianity and now accepted by many sincere Christians can be true! I believe that the dogmas of Christianity in many ways vilify and libel the character of God. These dogmas of Orthodox Christianity represent God as inferior in morals, in the sense of dignity, and in the principle of justice, to man himself. Has not God Himself established the laws of kindness, love and affection in our human relations, as parents and children? The mother in her love to her offspring is only the agent of the power and will behind her. God in his power and character is the Patermaternal Parent of us all! All of good in us witnesses to the greater good in Him. Yet Christians in their creeds have represented God as so inferior to man in justice and kindness that he has created mankind totally depraved, that he has made a hell to put them in; not to enlighten and reform them but to torture them! These creeds further represent God as establishing a heaven, for those who believe in these dogmas; thus rewarding only those who believe Him to be cruel and

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unjust! This picture is not overdrawn, it is the exact truth; and in the past ages when men really believed these dogmas and burned and tortured thousands of fellow creatures for not believing them, they did not by their persecutions for religious opinions represent human will or human character, they represented the supposed will of their cruel God, anticipating the time of everlasting punishment of unbelievers.

It is true that these harsh doctrines have softened and are still softening. Slow, however, are the changes in mental progress. It is strange that mothers looking upon their own beautiful children have not long ago given the lie to the doctrine of "total depravity." The truth is, nothing depraved ever has come or ever will come from the hand of God.

There is no more sense in pronouncing man in an uncultivated state to be totally depraved, than there would be in a gardener calling a wild apple tree or grape-vine or a puny strawberry totally depraved. They are simply undeveloped. Cultivate them! Evolve them through the human mind by delightful healthful toil and care; so shall you bring them to perfection. Throughout all nature this principle holds good, and man is no exception to the universal rule that cultivation and training develop toward perfection, and that the natural state if deficient is not depraved, but simply undeveloped.

If God had finished all things to a state of perfection, there would have been nothing left for man to do; nothing on which to exercise our activities. God has not given us a hard task in placing us here to finish up and perfect things in this world. Self-reliance and labor in every department of useful-

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ness is really a delightful privilege. Comprehending these great Divine principles let every one work, in some sphere of usefulness.

The world is full of things unfinished and imperfect. Man is kindly permitted to finish and perfect these; or he may, by virtue of the liberty with which he is endowed, retrograde and mar. Man is permitted to fix himself stubbornly, to the extent of his power, in ignorance, in superstition and in vice. And he may organize himself in collective capacity to sustain and to perpetuate systems of religions which are outgrown and false.

After-ages will recognize as we cannot, the pettiness of the Christian theology which has prevailed for so many centuries, and by which men have estimated the mind and character of God by the tape-measure of a narrow ideal. And to some of us it is already shown to be false and mischievous.

But, as I said before, it is permitted to man to organize for the support of many institutions which have outlived their real usefulness. Many millions of dollars have been spent in the building of Christian churches, many of which are beautiful as well as costly structures. On a door within the chapel I have built, are these words: "Organized error is more powerful than unorganized truth." I intended by these words to convey the idea that human liberty permits us to organize, propagate and sustain erroneous systems of religion and government. This we do by material aid, by education, by burning as it were, into the minds of children a belief in certain doctrines which we teach them are essential to their well-

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being here and hereafter. By thus teaching that the acceptance of certain opinions is a saving virtue how easily may any system be impressed upon confiding children. The *success*, then, of any system of belief is no criterion of its truth! As an example of this fact I would refer the Christian believer to the multitudes who worship what to him are false gods, and believe in what to him are false systems of religion. Unless we use the reason and reflecting powers with which we are endowed to correct erroneous views of religion, morality, justice in government and so on, we shall always be subjected to error. The evils of error can never be measured save by the new truth which is revealed. And we may well ask with Festus of old: "What is truth?" One fixed fact is that truth is of slow development, and its progress must be measured by the growth and influence of reason and experience. We are now in a transition state; and it is as true to say that we have always been in a transition state. No human organization or decree can prevent the progress of the human mind; but ignorance and superstition do retard that progress. The idea of God, of a Higher Power than man, will I believe never be eradicated from the mind of man; but by the training and cultivation of reason and science that idea is becoming enlarged and refined as man progresses in intelligence and civilization. It has already become perceptibly refined and enlarged from the old and grosser forms of the Christian faith; and all the foundations of that faith are being examined and tested; and slowly but surely the sunlight of the truths of science will dispel the clouds of misconception and error which now obscure the real

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truths in the Christian system. Surely we are justified in looking for progress toward perfection in all things appertaining to humanity, in our religious views and systems of faith, as well as in all other departments of human thought and activity.

In our day and generation, however, while error is comfortably housed, the naked truth may be often found outside shivering in the cold of neglect. This is illustrated by the condition of many religious societies. The older members of Orthodox Christian societies will tell you, if you suggest the adoption on their part of newly discovered truths, "Oh, our minds are already made up. All we know, and all we want to know, is Christ and Him crucified. We hope and believe that we are washed clean from sin by the blood of the Lamb. We must believe all that we find in the Sacred Book." If you ask such an old-time believer: "Do you believe in 'election?' in 'foreordination?' in heaven, hell, and in 'salvation by faith' and not by good works?" he will answer if he is honest and true to the convictions burnt into his soul by severe but kind parents, and by ministers in whose learning and judgment he has always confided, "Yes, I believe; God save me from unbelief and from the awful fate of the unbeliever!"

To my thought, no more than you or I, reader, was Christ especially divine or supernaturally inspired. A greater or less sense of what is good and just is the gift of every human being not born an idiot. And this sense of the right and true may be called inspiration, and may be said to be divine, since all human powers are of divine origin. Christ was only a

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man, as we are men, inspired to do good to the extent of his intelligence. And no man should believe the absurd story of the "Immaculate Conception," which seeks to make of this good and great man a bastard demigod.

Such a story of Christ's birth is not only a libel upon God's character, but helps to perpetuate the doctrine of the total depravity of children born in the natural way, and is therefore also a libel upon the dignity of human nature itself.

The religion of reason and common sense which I advocate, is, in my opinion, a thousand times superior to the Christian system of theology which thus begins with the total depravity of man and ends with maligning the character of God Himself!

Children are born inexperienced, not "depraved," and they have a natural right to better teachings than Christian parents and teachers generally give them. As soon as children can comprehend anything, they are charged to love God and worship Christ, and believe the Bible as a Divine rule of life, and unite themselves with other sheep in the Christian fold. And they are promised if they will do this, immortality in a literal heaven somewhere in the skies! While if they refuse the acceptance of these doctrines, they are threatened with a fiery hell in another fixed locality!

These errors are not peculiar to the Christian religion. All the religions of the world seem to have had their birth and early development in ignorance and superstition.

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WANTED: A BETTER SYSTEM OF RELIGION.

To create a sort of faith or conviction in the minds of the unthinking and confiding it is only necessary to assert positively and frequently, that such and such doctrines are true. Iteration and reiteration are the only levers necessary to produce belief or unbelief in the masses of mankind. "Why," asks one, "if what passes for the truths of Christianity are really errors, why are they so universally believed?" If we reflect a little, we shall see that the methods used to impress the faith of Christian creeds upon the minds of the people are sufficient to account for the fixedness of that faith. The same methods would, and do, fix the creeds of Mohammedanism and all other systems of theological belief which have been organized in institutions.

Although there are some truths stated in the Bible of the Christians which will endure to the end of mankind, and which no evolution or progress will wipe out, yet the origin of the Christian system of theology is human, and that system has been founded in ignorance and superstition like the systems of other religions. One of the puerilities of the Christian system is to attach merit to belief and demerit to unbelief of its dogmas. A believing or an unbelieving state of

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mind respecting a given principle is involuntary. Our beliefs are made up from evidences presented to our reason and experience, of the truth or falsity of ideas. We should therefore condemn no honest believer for his opinions, but should simply condemn what seem to us the errors of any system of faith we oppose. As I have elsewhere written and now repeat, "God's approving smile is never withheld from the consciousness of those who sincerely believe and teach the best they know." It matters not whether they believe and teach error or truth; it is the honest *intent* of the mind and heart which God regards. With this principle in view it should be easy and natural for the Christian to take the honest infidel by the hand, as also for the Atheist and Agnostic to fraternize with the Christian. This is true charity and should be one of the guiding principles of human action. Surely, to ascertain our true relations with God, and to seek to perform the duties which grow out of these relations, is all that God or man requires of any of us. And as the interest of all requires that the best guiding principles in all our relations with God and man should be adhered to, so far as we know them, all should be willing to meet amicably on the common ground of reflection, investigation and kindness. We should consider without dogmatism these questions respecting religion which are of the highest import and interest both to ourselves and to our children.

We must decide these great questions concerning the character of God and our relations to Him, and the sentiments we should cherish and express toward Him, by the light of our

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mental constitution. We have to judge of all things in this world by human faculties more or less enlightened by reason and common sense. By these tests, I dare to judge of the Christian system of theology; and where it seems to conflict with the revelations of God's character in outward nature, to condemn that system as erroneous.

I wish it to be understood, however, that I do not in the least impugn the sincerity or the character of Christians! Many, perhaps most of them, have a higher standard of practical morality than is logically justified by the character of the God they have pictured in their theologies. And I would suggest to all the liberal-minded who have ventured to criticise the Christian theology, that if it were possible to close the Christian churches on account of the errors therein taught, such a course would not be desirable!

In all natural processes, which are divine because natural, changes are slow and in consequence more sure than if abrupt. This law of gradual change is seen in religious as in all other forms of human development.

Now what above all else I desire to see in those now in power is *toleration.* It is toleration I seek in trying to introduce my own ideas of religion, which are simply modifications of the prevailing ones.

When the prevailing ideas are generally modified by enlightened reason and common sense, there will be great increase in churches and congregations, and the glad tidings of a better religion than is generally known will be received by all with enthusiasm! I propose a platform of religious

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toleration and pure morality upon which all can stand; the Christian and the atheist and the philosopher in harmony.

Meanwhile, in this closing time of the nineteenth century, there are many varieties of what is termed "the Orthodox Christian faith." It is not difficult to see how these doctrines of Orthodoxy were originated and how they kept their place of command for so many centuries. In the early time, when Christianity was born, gods of many kinds and qualities were in vogue among the heathen nations. Christ was a Jew and it was not strange that he should adopt the God who was idealized by his ancestors; a single God whose special occupation it was to look after the interests and well-being of His chosen people the Jews. The Jewish God was the type of the Jewish mind, hating the heathen who were enemies of the Jews. Christ was honest in character, and in his mind these inherited ideas became liberalized to a certain extent. Perhaps he grew broader in spirit and in thought by contact with the more philosophic minds of his day outside of his own people. We learn little of his life from the Christian Scriptures from the time he was reported to have talked with the wise men in the corridors of the Temple, when he was a boy of twelve, until he began his public ministry at about thirty. During that time he may have been frequently in the company of the most intelligent men of his time. Certainly he had somewhere adopted some very sensible ideas which are shown in his parables and sermons. If all that is claimed as original with him could be, as much has been, shown to be borrowed from other sources, still his selection of such thoughts proves

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his wisdom to be superior to that possessed by his followers. It is clear that Jesus was an honest man, with many sensible ideas, and with a good judgment and a good heart. Yet the honest investigator must discover in the record of his sayings and his life many eccentricities and impracticable ideas. It is certain that none of the philosophers and sensible men of his day entertained his idea of giving all one's money away and going out preaching to get one's living by begging from others!

And I know of no Orthodox merchants or successful Christians of to-day who follow this rule of life! Nor has Christ's doctrine of "non-resistance" to evil ever been adopted as the just and useful rule of life by intelligent Christians. I do not believe that Christ ever taught the fearful doctrine of hell-fire and eternal punishment, for that doctrine is utterly at variance with all that we know of his kind and loving and just character. It is probable that all these devilish characteristics of the Christian theology were interpolations and misunderstandings of the gospel of Jesus. It is easier to believe that the sacrifice of accumulated riches for the benefit of the poor originated with Jesus himself, for that doctrine conveys the idea of charity, which was his strongest point in preaching. And he by his own action in forsaking the ordinary paths of industry and honest labor, and depending upon the charity of others while he went about preaching, endorsed a manner of life which in our day well-to-do Christians would condemn. I think we should house in our reformatories and police stations those who tried

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to literally obey some of the commands of Jesus to-day. Although modern Christians save their money, and do not either give all that they have to the poor, or themselves become begging tramps, it is no doubt true that these teachings of Jesus respecting property led to the "mendicant orders," and the indolent monkish system, and many other elements of ancient Christianity which have been the allies of ignorance and superstition. Governments, under the influence of these ancient orders of Christianity have been the means of sustaining the Church by forcing the laboring man to support the Church and all its idle priests. The English Government, it will be remembered, at one time forced the Irish Catholics to pay tithes for the support of the Episcopal Church in addition to the dues which the Roman Catholic Church exacted from them.

Recently the power of the Government has been less and less invoked to sustain established churches by oppressive exactions from the people. And in England, France and Germany they are considering the question how to do away altogether with the bond between Church and State.

In the Constitution of these United States, the Christian religion, as well as all others, is nominally ignored; and yet we have in Congress our chaplains who pray over the miserable sinners who represent us! Our public Thanksgivings are commendable; may they exist forever! In a true and scientific religion, such as the writer would like to help inaugurate, the Gospel of Gratitude will, I think, be one of the corner-stones. Humble acknowledgments and gratitude

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to the true God for the all-comprising gift of life will be forever in order.

The principles of a truly scientific religion would enable all mankind to stand on the same platform. It would be a religion that every government might aid and ally itself with, in perfect safety. It would be one which even the secular schools could adopt, and teach its principles in a way to honor God and dignify man.

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CLOUDS BREAKING.

Occasionally a faint gleam of light pierces through the clouds which enshroud the religious world, and even reaches to the theological seminaries. If the principle of "Progressive Orthodoxy" be suffered to exist, it will be like a spark of fire applied to the theological rubbish accumulated since the commencement of the Christian era, which in time by a little incautious fanning by such men as Professors Smith and Harris and others, would raise a bonfire that would destroy all the irrationalities and false gods of the Orthodox Church, leaving only good and true principles, and a *true* God, which, however hidden by the thick fogs of superstition, may become mentally visible and can never be destroyed.

The Conservatives are right! It will not do to send among the heathen, missionaries with humane feelings which they dare to express! Their "Prudential Committees" must not sleep at their posts. No man in the employ of an Orthodox organization must be allowed to think or to fight on his own hook, from behind a tree, as did the grandfather of Theodore Parker at the battle of Bunker Hill. All must be regularly enlisted and marked with the true label. There is no way of salvation except through Christ, according to the Orthodox system; and the idea that there may be a chance for any one of the millions of heathen to be saved just because he could

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by no possibility have heard of Christ, is dangerous to the system! If there is humanity in the idea of hope for the poor heathen, that does not save it from condemnation on theologic grounds.

By the persevering efforts of the clergy the devotion to old faiths is kept alive. And since the authorities of the Orthodox Divinity Schools forbid the learning and teaching of any essentially new truth in religion, a large class of the clergy reiterates constantly the old ideas. However it is now beginning to be seen, that both Christian teachers and all others who occupy the position of public instructors are properly subject to criticism. They are pre-eminently in a position to have their principles and statements fairly examined by all whom they address.

Our Christian friends are thoroughly organized all over the civilized world. Their teaching is given systematically and persistently. And their standard of belief is made the touchstone of holiness by vast numbers of worshippers.

Yet the question is being asked in many quarters, shall we not have a new and better religion?

If we need any God at all, we need a generous, kind and protecting one! We need a God who in respect to the large family of man which covers our beautiful earth, stands in the same relation to all of us as kind parents stand in relation to their children. I believe firmly in the existence of such a God and Father of us all.

And if we are to have a new and grander religion to fit such a conception of God, shall we build fresh from the

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foundation, or shall we seek to remodel the old structure of Christianity now in a state of decay?

Before we answer that question it is well to consider the fate of those within the Orthodox Christian family who have sought to change the shape of the old home. Some have conceived the notion that the Christian faith would be strengthened if some of its old creeds were *humanized.* For instance, some have been bold enough to express the hope that the souls of the ancestors of the heathen might possibly be saved by the blood of Christ if they could not possibly have heard of him! And these members of the Orthodox family were for this monstrous heresy promptly hauled up for trial and condemned. And it seems to be the wish of many to put such guilty doubters out of the homestead.

It seems therefore that the leaders of the Christian organization would not give much co-operation to any attempt to change the old tabernacle. A few half-fledged sceptics within the fold of the church would welcome any attempt to awaken attention to a new and better belief. But the clergymen have too many interests at stake to welcome any change. By strenuous efforts in the Sunday School, and in the sermons for adults and children, they seek to bring their flocks to a belief of, or at least to a passive assent to the most essential points of the old creed.

But let us glance at the old structure, examine its timbers, take note of its foundation, the size of its rooms, and decide if in its entirety it be large enough to accommodate and satisfy the whole human family, now and in the future. I

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think, if we are honest and intelligent, we must decide that the superstructure of Christianity, with its many decayed timbers, must be replaced by a more solid and comfortable religious home. And to accomplish this end it must be decidedly modified from the old edifice.

It is in our own power to decide whether or not we will worship in a new religious edifice with new principles; or by sensible changes, modify gradually the principles of our own time-honored temples of religion. This position if taken by the advocates of prevailing religions would be reasonable, and all that any earnest, sincere man, holding to what he believes to be higher motives and aims, should reasonably desire. Preliminary to this work of repairing and remodeling an old building which was in many respects badly planned at first, it would be well to submit it in every part to a thorough examination. Doubtless, as many think, it was the very best house that could have been built at the period it was erected. But if it was originally built upon a rock the foundation must have been the sandstone of sentiment, soft and easily disintegrated, and not the granite of scientific truth. For the fact is, this old temple is shaky, and in parts mildewed and decayed. In spite of the gold and silver preservatives which have been constantly applied, the large and respectable family of present occupants show constant anxiety respecting its durability. "Prudential Committees" are called in alarm to prevent the further loosening of the timbers which hold the frame together. But in spite of their watchfulness the work of decay goes on!

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Let us retain all of good and of truth which Christianity contains and let us endeavor to eliminate all of the error. Let us retain all of the humane and intelligent in Christ or in any other good man, and eliminate all the erroneous pretentions to his divinity. There must be something divine in the human, however, since in his nature and constitution man is the conception of a Divine mind. But as compared with God's intelligence and goodness man's mind and heart are but as drops of water compared to the ocean. Nay, they may be likened to the drops in the dirt, or the moisture of mud, which must be drawn up and purified by the sun and the atmosphere of Divine influences, before they become like the pure drops of water which fall into the ocean.

When we shall have attained to a knowledge of our true relations with the higher powers we shall look back with astonishment to the ideas of God which prevail in our day. When that time comes all monstrous idealizations of God's character, such as now are presented for our acceptance will have forever passed away. Then all selfish, useless prayers will have ceased, and grateful acknowledgements will have taken their place in our temples of worship.

Meanwhile, simultaneously with tearing down the false in the Christian temple of faith, we should build up the truth. It is better to be sheltered somewhere, if in a poor house, than to be in the open air, subjected to storms and miasma and such sufferings as often destroy life. Let the whole family of true believers unite and reconstruct as fast as it can, since the old house is so badly demolished! Let us organize

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to finish the new structure as fast as the old is removed. Let us do this as soon as we can, and the best we may. A part of the family who should be workers and reconstructors, now stand idle with their arms folded, criticising and pointing out the rotten timbers and poor materials of the house. How much better employed would they be in selecting solid materials for the repairs, in holding up the new joists until some master-builder stays and braces them together! Only by united effort can we finish the new temple of faith. Being unable to join conscientiously any of the prevailing religious organizations, are the critics therefore justified in doing nothing — are there no duties for the intelligent Radical to perform? He sees organized error and the success of it; if the influence of organized error is so powerful cannot we legitimately entertain the hope and belief that organizations for teaching simple truths, a true religion embracing all our duties would be successful? I believe it.

To Unitarians, rather than to Free Religious Societies, so called, do we look for aid in this reconstructive work. On them we fix our hopes of arriving at a knowledge of the noble guiding principles of a pure and simple religious belief, such as I hope will some day be universally adopted. The Free Religious Societies seem to me to have no future unless they can change the basis of their organization; and no religion, that is, if we define religion to be the duties growing out of our relations with God. The Free Religious ministers teach morality and nothing more. It seems to me a misuse of terms for them to retain the name of "religion," which

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means to them simply thinking as one pleases on all matters appertaining to God and religion. Individualism is with them the great principle. Members are at liberty to believe in a God or not. So it has come to pass that God is not acknowledged by them. Agnosticism prevails among them. They do believe in a religion of pure morality and teach it. But religion is not morality alone. As a body they are honest and intelligent: but so far as any fixed principles are concerned the Free Religionist may be considered an intellectual groper floundering in uncertainties. "But" asks one of them, "have we not abandoned the popular churches of the day"? Yes, granted, and your coming out from them is a proof of your intelligence. But you have only retreated from the errors and heathenisms of the popular churches; and I wish to emphasize that word "*retreat*" for it signifies a backward movement. You are indeed all out of many errors and well out. But have you advanced into new truths? You have abandoned old faiths; where are your settled truths to replace them? "But" says another, "we are still searching for them." Let us hope that your search will be crowned with success!

As to the members of the Free Religious Societies they are worthy of all confidence. And for myself, although I have never joined the Free Religious Society, I have tried to assist it in a modest way. A society that believes in fraternity and pure morality should and must be honored and respectable, and sooner or later may become a religious society. And at present it is much more pleasant and profitable to listen to

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their speakers than to those Orthodox friends whose teaching of errors makes one disturbed. Let us imagine a conversation between an outsider of ordinary intelligence and a member of the Free Religious Society:

Stranger: "What Christian denomination do you belong to?"

Member: "No Christian denomination, I belong to the Free Religious Society of Providence."

Stranger: "What is your creed?"

Member: "We have no creed; we do not believe in creeds."

Stranger: "You do not then belong to any Christian sect?"

Member: "Oh no! most of our parents were Christians; but our minds are emancipated. We have thought ourselves out from the errors and superstitions of the old creeds."

Stranger: "Have you replaced the Christian creeds by any collection of principles or beliefs by which you consent to be guided?"

Member: "No, each one thinks for himself independently of any other."

Stranger: "You are then purely fragmentary, with no organization whatever?"

Member: "We are organized as a Free Religious Society, each one to be religious in his own way as he understands it. We are bound by no written code of principles, creed, or articles of belief. We have no belief in common as to what religion is. No one is obligated by joining the society to be

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religious at all. And each one does his own thinking in perfect freedom."

Stranger: "Would it not be well to drop the name of "Religious Society," if that is the case, and substitute the name of "The Society of Free and Independent Thinkers?"

Member: "We have chosen the name of "Free Religious Society," but we can vote to change it for what may be thought more appropriate."

Stranger: "You meet at stated times?"

Member: "Yes, as a rule on Sundays."

Stranger: "You have adopted the day instituted by Jews and Christians then. What is done at your meetings?"

Member: "As a rule we hire intelligent men to address us, to present their best thoughts and suggestions upon scientific, moral and religious subjects."

Stranger: "A very excellent object. You place yourselves then in the position of listeners and learners?"

Member: "We do! each member by his own process of thinking assimilates what he considers to be truth, and true principles, as the speaker presents them."

Stranger: "Are there not times when the speakers announce or present a truth that seems to meet with the general approbation of the Society?"

Member: "This happens not infrequently. And we demonstrate this general approval by gentle plaudits."

Stranger: "This sentiment of general approval may be considered in a sense an adoption of the truth or principle enunciated by the speaker, may it not?"

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Member: "Undoubtedly! we store our minds with truths and honest convictions of intelligent men."

Stranger: "Would it not be well to note or codify the sentiments or principles which when enunciated by your speaker draw from the assembled Society marks of approbation?"

Member: "Individualism and independence of thought are the prevailing principles which we approve. The condemnation of intolerance, the criticism of gross errors and superstitions, and the inculcating of pure morality have so far been our aim; this rather than to adopt or teach any system of religion."

In my opinion the most effective rebuke we can make in regard to the errors of any existing system of religion is to conceive of and bring into exercise a better system. I believe that those who would criticise the Christian's God, should introduce and recommend for worship a nobler object of love and honor.

As the sun enlightens and shines upon every portion of the habitable globe, so should a religion blended with morality exist that should irradiate and cheer the mind and heart of all mankind!

The truth, whatever it may be, should be the aim of all research and reasoning; and any religion which will not place the truth above all preconceived ideas will not suit the modern mind. Truth is all known and verified fact. Is not the religion we are seeking for a religion of truth? Of course new truths will be constantly developed through the human mind

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by time and experience, and all new truths must be in turn added to those already accepted and taught, if our religion is to be kept pure.

Both religion and morality must recognize this important fact of the growth of the human mind through new discoveries of truth. And in the exercise of the religious principles which I hope to see initiated, the countenance and assent of the honest and thoughtful men of science will be by no means neglected.

True religion does not degrade! No sycophantic abjectness is called for by God in His relations with His creatures. Our true relations with the Higher Power demand of us as a point of honor and simple justice merely, acknowledgments and gratitude for the gift of life, and for all the happiness and possibilities of happiness we enjoy or may enjoy. The duties of a rational religion voluntarily rendered heighten the dignity of man, and do not lessen that of the God of our devotion. Our liberty is not interfered with by this Higher Power. Nothing is required of us; but the exercise of all virtue, comprising all sincere religious devotion, is a human privilege. The intelligence of the Christian sects has not yet evolved to the point of comprehending that this exercise of religious sentiments is a human privilege and not a Divine requirement. It would indeed be a double disaster if we should be punished for not availing ourselves of our precious religious privileges, which God permits us either to enjoy or to abstain from.

They forget that man can only regulate and perform his duties in his relations to God by the exercise of the same human

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faculties of reason and knowledge which are given him to exercise in his relations with his fellow creatures. Truths, or principles and laws, always existed; and man through the natural activities of his mind, aided by his senses, has the power to discover them. The discovery of one truth is the stepping stone to the discovery of another, since all truth is joined harmoniously together. Man has discovered much of truth; what proportion the discovered bears to the undiscovered no one knows. But a healthy fair-minded person will admit that the world is already rich in its natural and acquired means of happiness and knowledge. Life from the hand of our Divine Father has always been "worth living" from the beginning until now. And it hardly can be called Utopian to anticipate that a time is coming when machinery will be perfected, when the fine arts will be followed more or less by all, as interesting activities, when human laws supplementing and harmonizing with the Divine right shall prevail, when cruel wars shall cease and nations shall be governed in their relations to each other by reason and an enlightened conscience; and, I may add, when railroads shall be taken from the hands of millionaires and run by each honest government for the use of the people. We look forward to a time when governments shall be administered upon the same principles of wisdom and justice which now rule the actions of cultivated and enlightened men and women. And above all we look forward to a time when a pure religion, from which Pessimism and characterless gods shall have been eliminated, shall prevail; and the true God, our loving Father, shall be understood. Then life will be enjoyed by all. Health,

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cheap living, much leisure to look about the world will then be enjoyed. And our natural activities of mind and body may be exercised by all, in accordance with the individual bent of taste, innocently and harmoniously. Then should we gain a more blissful Eden than any imagined lost by "man's fall." All these attainments are easily possible through ascertainment of and obedience to the laws of God. In the meantime the anticipation of and faith in this better time of the future will inspire us to work to bring about these happy results.

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THOUGHTS IN REGARD TO A NEW RELIGION.

If the term "religion" be interpreted as meaning the performance of all the duties growing out of our relations with Divine Power, the first question to be asked and answered is: What are the relations between God and man? And the second is: What are the duties that should be performed in consequence of our relations with God? The writer in no way pretends that his individual views and convictions in regard to what he considers should be guiding principles in religion and morality should be adopted as finalities. There have been no finalities arrived at in past time in the avowed principles of religion and morality. And no man can see further than his own honest reasonings, and what seem to him legitimate convictions resulting from the experience of his day and hour. Progress, through the observation and study of the human mind, carries us ever onwards toward a more perfect state of existence. There is nothing in the universe that is fixed and unchangeable but the laws of God! There are no evolutionary changes in the great Divine principles which govern the universe. There is no need of change in the law and power of gravity, no need of change in the obedient circling of the planets around their mother the sun, like the motion of human offspring around their mother who loves and protects them. There is no need of evolutionary change in the great

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divine principle of love and protection of offspring, from human parentage down to the parentage of the smallest organized animalculæ that exist. And so on through all natural laws, there is no need of change in the endowment of human will and free agency nor of the human responsibility annexed to human liberty. All these principles and laws are Divine finalities over which the human mind has no power or influence. Above all, there is no need of evolutionary change in the power, intelligence, and goodness of the great Mind and Heart of the universe. But there is great need of change in the religious and moral teachings of the world. Changes toward a more perfect statement of religious truth can only be brought about by human means through the enlightenment of the human mind. The degree of human free-will and power that we possess need not be increased by the Divine Power and never will be! But once comprehended it is sufficient to carry on the human race toward the goal of perfection, in all things. We may exercise implicit faith in the great truth that no Power above man in the universe will interfere with our human liberty to perfect ourselves! Human will and liberty in their collective power may enable us to become the artificers of our own happiness and well-being in this world!

Man has thus the power to make himself intelligent and good by observation, by reflection, and by experience. He should therefore study, examine and investigate all things in order that he may ascertain the truth; for the truth will make us free; free from ignorance and superstition and from all evil.

In religion, as in music, the purest and sweetest essence

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lies in a confiding simplicity of character. Our true relations with God ask from us humility, confidence, gratitude and love. As the mind and heart are most affected in music by sweet and simple melodies, so the human soul is most moved in religious sentiments by the simplest principles of religion. On a tablet in the Bell St. Chapel is this inscription: "The intelligent and good live near to God." I believe that is true and will always remain so. In the human soul are the possibilities of approximation to the Divine mind; and the qualities of intelligence of mind and goodness of heart should always be united in humble imitation of the character of God. We are God's children, the offshoots, so far as we know, of His best thoughts. To perceive and appreciate His intelligence and goodness should be as easy as to breathe, and would be so if our minds and hearts were attuned to His nature as they might be. Let us study the intents of that Wisdom which is above all human wisdom in regard to us.

Do you ask "Why we were not conditioned and constituted by God so that we could not escape experiencing the happy effects on our mind and heart which the exercise of virtue and the pursuit of intelligence may give us? Many of us are wicked and corrupt, and do not enjoy the amount of happiness which the virtuous and good enjoy. Why was not this happiness settled upon all of us as an heirloom? Why is what is termed evil in the world at all?" In discussing the character of God we must admit that all questions of this nature are pertinent. They are often put with a sort of indignation and vigor by individuals of all classes, even by those

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acknowledged to be profound philosophers. I realize the difficulty of answering these questions to the satisfaction of those persons who are unfortunate and suffering. Yet I believe in a God of perfect wisdom and love; and I believe we should all thank that Power, in whatever form or substance It may exist, of which man and all living creatures are the outgrowth, for the portion of happiness we each enjoy, and also for the possibilities of increased happiness which we do not enjoy but which our freedom permits us to attain by the ascertainment of and obedience to God's laws.

We should also thank God that the human race, being thus gifted, grows on, gradually evolving, by the aid of experience and reason, toward a happier and better state.

And in regard to the prevailing faith in what are called "miracles," we would say we do not believe the laws of nature, which are wisely established by a higher power than man, were ever broken or interfered with by God. And any system of religion that requires miracles to establish it is not worth sustaining. If such interference with established laws were possible to any God as is narrated in the holy books of many religions, it would prove no religious principle! A miracle, if true, would have no moral quality whatever. To perform a miracle, in the ordinary sense of that word, would be to prove only how much folly could be attached to power! And no man who understands and respects himself worships or esteems power in itself. To prove the existence of a power above man sufficient to break established laws of nature would prove nothing respecting an object worthy of man's love and rever-

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ence! We do not reverence either God or devil simply because they are powerful. Power must be associated with goodness and intelligence to command our respect and worship. We believe that the most cultivated and best conditioned race of mankind is typical of a higher mental and physical and moral Power above itself. We believe that mind as manifested in man is the same in kind as the mind of the Power above us whom we call God. And we believe that mind works in obedience to great principles or laws which the most intellectual obey most implicitly.

We want the same fidelity to true and higher principles in religion that the Christian has shown through so many centuries toward erroneous ideas. We want in a modified and enlarged system of religious worship and duty, the same inflexible conservatism which the Christian has exercised toward what he has conceived to be his highest moral and religious duties. We want the Christian to voluntarily modify his ancient faith, but not to change those feelings and affections of the heart which have been cultivated and advanced while the reason has lain dormant. In face of scientific discoveries which have disproved their doctrines, they have still felt and believed they had the truth. And they have clung to the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and knowledge. Every scientific man believes in all the truths of the Bible, but no one is justified in believing that all of the Bible is true. Christians have not believed enough in their own God-given liberty to think and reason, hence they have held to error with the same devotion that they have to truth.

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I would like to see a religious society established which would attach no merit to belief, or condemnation to unbelief; which would give to all the right of honest freedom of thought and individual conviction. These should be guaranted to all. But since there is greater power for good in united than in isolated action, the ideal religious society would have a proper coincidence in object and sympathy of views, to give the force which unity commands.

To that end the new religion will, it seems to me, stand for the actuating principles which are the highest which can influence the human mind, namely: Gratitude to God and a high principle of honor toward God and man. These two principles powerfully influence us toward obedience to the laws of nature, moral and physical. These laws of nature shadow forth the character of God, and the wise and good man is the highest manifestation of that wise and beneficent influence which permeates all nature. Such principles of gratitude and honor dignify and ennoble man and lead to the highest perfection of his own nature. The professed doctrines of a religious society should raise a man in his own estimation, not degrade and belittle him. They should teach a man who honestly does the best he knows, to respect and honor himself. To be good and intelligent is to live near to God; and such a man, whatever his religious belief, can raise his eyes and address the Spirit of intelligence and goodness and say, "Oh God, I thank thee that thou hast constituted man able to feebly reflect in his character Thy own perfections. And I thank Thee that Thou hast given man power to grow ever toward perfection."

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RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

Religion is the performance of all duties growing out of our relations with God, and *morality* is the performance of all duties growing out of our relations with our fellow-creatures. Through human free-will and liberty God accords to man the great privilege of rendering himself happy and noble by the ascertainment and observance of the laws of nature which harmonize with the laws of his own being.

We believe that to practice religious and moral duties is a privilege that humanity cannot afford to forego.

We believe that while the knowledge of our relation with God inspires gratitude, and emotions which honor God and ennoble man, the practice of moral duties one toward another, the duties of justice, fraternity, and the love that makes us feel that we are all members of one human family, are a part of our religious duties also. For by thus obeying the moral law in our relations with each other we co-operate with God in the perfecting of the human race. In seeking to modify, not destroy, the present moral and religious views of the age, as concreted in Christianity, let us choose for our new foundations the noblest and truest principles of action that we can conceive of, that the human reason can approve in our own day; leaving to the future human heart and intellect the task of further modifying and refining the moral and religious principles which we believe should guide us.

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AFFIRMATIONS OF PRINCIPLES:

BY AN UNKNOWN AND MODEST INDIVIDUAL; FOR THE TRUTH OF THE MOST OF WHICH NO OTHER INDIVIDUAL IS RESPONSIBLE.

Mind in all existences is invisible and the great governing powers of the universe form no exception to this rule. But as in man and the lower existences, so in the higher powers and in God, the phenomena, the manifestations of all nature, not only prove the existence, but they show the character of the invisible power. I have no dispute with any one as to the name to be given this great invisible Power above man. If I know anything I know that I exist; and that I must have existed before the consciousness which now attests that existence. For it is consciousness and not experience which testifies to personal existence. And my endowment of reason informs me that the materials composing my personality existed before consciousness of any mental power, since the material of which that personality consists is the same as that common to all substances of the earth.

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Is it not easy to see in the wonderful evolution of organized existences from this lowest of all substances, the earth, a Power behind, that we may call "God?" Do you ask "Is God concentrated and personal, or is He diffused throughout all nature?" I would suggest that God is both personal and diffused, and exists everywhere in exact proportion to the need for His presence. God is present in a greater or less degree in all organized moving forms down to the humble plant or blade of grass. God is in all, and in accordance with the most enlightened human reason, He is antecedent to all. Would you ask "Who and what was antecedent to your God?" I would reply that considering our existence, our constitution and environment, if the question is not foolish it is not pertinent, since it cannot be answered! No mind of man ever conceived of a first cause or primal beginning. Why? Because man is not constituted to comprehend it. A question which cannot be answered is not a pertinent question to discuss. The immediate God of this world we can and do in a measure comprehend, since we can learn and perceive His qualities. Man's most perfect justice and intensified kindness to his loved ones is, so to speak, only the moonlight as compared to the sunlight of God's justice and benevolence to all.

The true principles to guide us in perfecting ourselves in religion and morality are these: To be just and kind toward all. And justice involves charity, seeing that none of us are so happy as to have arrived at perfection.

The Unitarians of to-day are the most advanced towards a rational religion such as I hope to see firmly initiated.

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The Unitarians are becoming organized into very pleasant social societies. This course is in accordance with my own views, as shown by the inscription I caused to be placed on the panel of a door in Bell St. Chapel, which reads, "Let us cherish the amenities of life." We should all endeavor to make life cheerful and pleasant to one another. Politeness and a kind sympathy in the welfare of all those with whom we come in contact are always in order and cost little.

No matter what theological views are entertained, no matter of what nation, no matter if rich or poor, to cherish and exercise this costless habit gives pleasure to both parties. Unitarians are civilizing themselves and amiably forsaking those harsh and unreasonable articles of faith still held by the honest and sincere Orthodox denominations of Christians. But the more conservative among them still cling to so many of the wrong ideas which permeate Christianity that I cannot call myself a Unitarian.

Should one ask "To what denomination do you belong?" I should be obliged to answer that I belong to none and have no Christian creed. The church to which I belong is not large! One individual is all that can be counted a member up to this date. But it is an elating fact that one additional member would increase its proportions one hundred-fold! And I hope that one year of patient, honest labor would increase the present membership a thousand-fold! One sound acorn judiciously planted is sufficient for the growth of a large tree with many strong branches. My hope is in the new seeds of truth which are now being planted. I believe that if I attended a church

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alone I should have the presence of God; for where there is real sincerity and some degree of reason in religious exercises, I believe He is always present.

I desire to help form a Religious Society which can say, "We are inside of Christianity, as we are inside of all the religions of the world, in every truthful principle which Christianity or any other system of religion inculcates! And we are outside every belief and principle of Christianity or other religious system which underestimates the character of God and lessens the true dignity of Humanity."

I believe that the perfection of mankind physically and mentally as well as morally is the end to be attained in religion. All progress and experience tend slowly toward that end. And let us not forget that it is in our own power to hasten this result.

In true religion every moral duty is comprised. I hope that in the Society which I desire to help form, the great principles of justice, kindness, and a reasonable charity to all, may be recognized, taught and practiced. I believe also that we should be just in estimating and describing the character of God, and not meet to vilify and ascribe to the great beneficent Power a character more unjust and cruel than the meanest and worst specimen of humanity that ever existed. Let us be just to all, not excluding the kind Author of our existence, with whom we have relations, and to whom we are indebted for the happiness which life comprises and all the unused possibilities of increased enjoyment. Let us be voluntarily grateful to God; there is no higher duty; there is no higher motive than

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gratitude to God to move us to further God's intent, which is the perfection of mankind in all ways. This perfection of mankind can be attained only through the efforts of man himself, through the exercise of the human intelligence and the cultivation of those sentiments of the heart which themselves lead to gratitude toward God. And gratitude to God is best shown by justice and kindness toward all creatures; for in all creatures is a spark of God whose love and power we would worship!

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IMMORTALITY.

I am asked do I believe in the immortality of the human mind, or in other words do I believe in the continued consciousness after death, of individual minds? I hope the reader will agree that it is best to discuss such a question as this with calmness, with a fearless honesty, with self-possession, keeping our passions, our prejudices, even our honest convictions, well in hand. May we all be inspired by the love of truth, for all truth is of God!

The question: "Are we each and all immortal in consciousness after death?" is too important to be replied to in flippant haste! Let each examine and reflect before deciding for himself. Let us look about us, here in New England, which may be called the land of the daring in thought, and see what we find for answer. For one, I cannot accept as final the prompt reply of the Orthodox, "Yes, we are all immortal." This reply is loudly echoed by all the Christian sects, down to the Unitarian, which by distinguished representatives assert, "Yes, we are immortal!" But many of the more advanced Unitarians express some doubt on the question, and those least affected by the beliefs of Christianity make more feeble and

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uncertain replies. We are left in doubt as to the belief of many distinguished men upon this point by their silence.

Meanwhile, silent are all the powers other and higher than man upon this great question of continued consciousness after death. Silent, for we cannot accept what are called Christian revelations any more than the intelligent men of that ignorant and superstitious age accepted them! And if we cannot accept the so-called evidence of personal immortality which is the ground of the Christian's hope, still less can we accept the so-called evidence of continued consciousness after death, which Spiritualism, claims to give. I believe that Spiritualism was founded and is now maintained by the meanest trickeries. I believe that the unprincipled "mediums" of our day sustain the belief in Spiritualism by appeals to that quality of the human mind which we call faith or confidence, which when applied to a pure religion, approved by reason, is a normal and noble quality; but which when applied to such a superstition as Spiritualism, becomes perverted to weakness and credulity.

And the mental disease of credulity has reached such extremes in the development of Spiritualism as to prove how great is the gullibility of poor human nature, and how rich a financial vein is worked by those who can trade upon it!

The advocates of Spiritualism will assure you that spirits do exist, and that for one dollar you may assist at a spiritual seance where evidence will be given to convince any one not rendered obdurate by prejudice, of the existence of a future conscious state. They thus claim to give the only positive

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and scientific evidence of immortality; since ministers of all religions treat it as a matter chiefly of faith and hope. In this way the velvet-footed medium seems to have stolen a march upon the Christian in the way of evidence, and obtained from the divine powers the chief proofs of a future state.

I claim there is no foundation in truth for belief in these pretensions of the trick-performers of so-called Spiritualism, and the averments of their unsophisticated believers. I consider the truth and falsity of this matter as settled, and hold no further discussion necessary.

Like the average man, the scientific student may be deceived by tricks and apparent phenomena, and spiritualists have been quite successful in cheating some noted scientists. A scientific man with his exact facts is a very useful person, but he is not necessarily a philosopher, or in any sense a very deep thinker ; and he needs good instruments, good eyes, and much patient investigation to do his work successfully.

What we call "inspiration" is the earnest and honest outcome of sincere minds, seeking the truth and giving unselfishly of the best they know to promote the welfare of their fellow creatures. The intuitive flashes of truth from an honest, searching and intelligent mind often excite admiration and wonder. But intuition is simply the rapid and hardy exercise of human thought. Christ had no inspiration other than any sincerely good man may experience. Inspiration may be felt in the earnestness of honest convictions by either Atheist or Christian; but only mean imitations of inspiration are in my opinion given by those who are dishonest and crafty. And

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such I esteem the tricky "mediums" who dupe the unsophisticated. These make their living out of the confiding credulity of their fellow-creatures, by leading them to believe in the "spirit power" which they claim is manifested through them, and they induce many to become willing to pay for the disgusting platitudes under the name of "communications" which are dealt out by them. The hope of the intelligent and honest is that when we awake from the nightmare-sleep of such silly superstitions they will be replaced by something more sensible.

In every death, the spark of God which has animated the body seems to become extinct; as in every birth a spark of God seems to become revived. Individuals, or particles of the entity of mankind, are sloughed off, and the material which composed the body, after death mingles again with its mother earth. Like broken glass it is thrown again into the furnace to be brought forth remodeled into other forms. Men and women die, but the race of man is immortal! As the particles composing a single human body change and are sloughed off constantly, yet the identity of the individual is left intact, so individuals composing the entity of mankind die, and new and fresh individuals are born to keep the race intact and make it immortal.

In spite of the fact that the death of the individual seems to end his consciousness, a large number of the most intelligent class of men believe in the immortality of their own consciousness. They believe that each mind will carry with it into the next world its own bundle of experiences, memories and beliefs; all in fact that makes it a distinct entity.

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We cannot however, teach as a positive truth the immortality of individual consciousness after death, for we have no facts or evidence that would justify such dogmatic teaching upon this subject. We cannot even teach the immortality of the race of mankind in the sense that theologians apply the idea to individuals of the race, for the only home of the race is on this earth. This vague and shadowy idea of existing after death often causes an unhealthy state of the mind, and sometimes makes men undervalue this life which rightly used is a positive blessing from the hand of God. And to lightly esteem this life in comparison with any other of which we have no proof in experience, is a kind of insult to the Giver of life.

I have given the subject of immortality much thought. Often on waking in the morning when the mind is freshest for thinking have I turned this subject over in my mind. Especially have I done this within a year or two. I shall soon be in my eightieth year; my health is good and my mind is contemplative rather than active; feeling as I gravitate toward my rocking chair that my life's work is slowly drawing to a close; that I am living on borrowed time, a tenant at will! I am honestly conscious of this fact. And I therefore have no motive in anything I say except to elicit truth upon this as upon all subjects.

If it should be proved that death ends all, rightly viewed the law of unconsciousness or death would be seen to be as divine in its conception as the law of birth and consciousness. For all laws are part and parcel of the same contriving wisdom. And since an unconscious body cannot be conscious of its own

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dissolution, the living alone suffer pain and regret at the extinction of a human life. If it should be proved that the whole story of the life of a human being should be "from the dust, to the dust," with the beautiful episode of life between, we could not complain. For the unconsciousness which in that case death would place us in, we were, before our birth, placed in also; that is, we were unorganized before our birth as we may be disorganized at death. Therefore we would be left precisely where we were found, an unconscious part of the great whole. And those who claim that we have a *right* to personal immortality might as well set up the claim that the Great Power is guilty of an injustice in permitting so many æons of time to elapse before each individual who lives now was organized into personality. We have just as much right to claim existence through the past ages as in the eternity which is to follow our little lives.

In a note-book of William Kingdon Clifford are found some sentences upon this subject of personal immortality which have struck me as important. He says, "Longing for deathlessness means simply shrinking from death. However or wherever we who live, endeavor to realize an end to this healthy life of action, in ourselves or in our brethren, the effect is a painful one. We do not want to die now, nor next year, nor the year after that, nor at any time that we can clearly imagine. What is this but to say that we want to live forever in the only meaning of the words that we can at all realize?"

There exists no evidence that a sensible and thoughtful mind can accept as *proof* that we shall live after death with

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our present consciousness of existence. Well, what if there does not? This affords us a fine chance of trusting in God that our birth being so great a blessing, our death, coming from the same kind Power, cannot be a great misfortune! Let us each be trustful and cheerful to the end, for who knows but our Divine Father has arranged an agreeable surprise for us at the end as at the beginning of this earthly life?

It is worthy of note in this connection that while scientists agree that there is no proof of the immortality of individual consciousness after death there is as certainly no proof to the contrary. And there are no good reasons given by any one why individual consciousness should not be given after death by the Divine Power! That beneficent Being who gave us life as a free gift and caused individual consciousness to appear, may be trusted in this matter of the continuance of that consciousness after death. Scientists are not necessarily philosophers, they give us simply the use of their eyes, and that is much.

An immortality worthy the name would be that desired by Benjamin Franklin when he says: "It would be gratifying to me to revisit the earth and my country to see what progress my countrymen have made under our state and federal Constitutions, what progress they have made in the principles of religion and morality." This aspiration of Franklin's we can all participate in.

I would sum up the discussion of the great question "Does death end all?" in the words which I have caused to be inscribed upon a panel in Bell St. Chapel:

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"He who gave us life gave us death! Coming from the same beneficent source why, if we realize that life is good, should we imagine that death is bad? Trust that Power whom we designate as God! Fear no event that God ordains must happen. Fear not death! The same wise and beneficent Power that gave you birth presides equally at your death. Trust in God!"

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PRAYERS TO GOD.

No person should insult his Maker by offering up to Him in public or in private any petition, prayer, advice or suggestion, in regard to the operation of the natural laws which are instituted in power, wisdom and goodness. And a notice or caution to abstain from all such addresses to God should be placed on the walls of all our churches. It is a shame to the vaunted civilization of the nineteenth century that such indignities to our Divine Father should be permitted!

It is true that no attention is paid to petitions and begging prayers by any Power above the human. No authentic proof exists that any prayer was ever answered or in any way noticed by any divinity. Petitioning and praying to God this writer would place among the venial sins. In proportion to the length of the begging prayer, is the waste of time, not only of the minister or spokesman but of the time of the whole congregation. This time is worse than misspent, for the iteration and reiteration of these foolish appeals, Sunday after Sunday, impress the minds of the auditors with false notions of the character of God, whom those who thus pray, suppose may be influenced and worked upon to change His mind in regard to some important matter concerning them! These foolish persons evidently think that God has inadvertently overlooked

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some things in creation and law which ministers feel it a duty, in the interest of their flocks, to instruct him about! They desire where God is wrong to set Him right! The whole process of prayer in the sense of petition or appeal implies the superiority of human wisdom as compared with the Divine.

It is true the earnest and honest Christian intends no offence in his endeavor to induce his God to change and warp for his benefit the unchangeable laws of mind and matter. This form of prayer is a part of the error which inheres in the Christian system of faith, which can only be overthrown by the spread of more enlightened ideas. We must replace the corner-stones of this erroneous system by more solid and reasonable religious and moral theories. There are four corner-stones of the Orthodox Christian system which need to be replaced; viz.:

First: An undignified, unmanly fear of a hell that does not exist. Second: A groundless hope of a heaven that exists only in an unreasonable and selfish imagination. Third: Faith in the propitiatory atonement of all our errors and sins through the blood of Christ, an innocent man. And fourth: Begging prayers to God to change His wise and good purposes and laws to please human beings. On a panel in Bell St. Chapel are these words:

"Praise and Acknowledgments: not Prayer! Let us not say, 'Give us!' But 'Thou hast given.'"

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CREEDS.

Free Religionists and Radicals say, "We want no written religious creeds, we want 'soul liberty,' freedom of thought and action." Why this prejudice against settled principles? If we ask a Radical, "Have you in your mind no idea of right and wrong, no principles, no settled rules to guide your actions?" "Certainly we have!" "Do you believe in a Power higher and superior to man?" "We do!" Then put it down fearlessly in writing! "Do you believe in justice? Should all persons be treated with the toleration which we ask of them?" "They should." Then declare all these things and many more will occur to you. These noble, guiding principles are the points of your creed, then why not put them in writing? Draw the attention of your children to them, they are entitled to know these truths; don't cover up the light of these truths in the casket of your own mind. An honest man who makes a contract with another should be willing to put it in writing. "But" says the Radical, "as the world and truth are developed, we may wish to modify and change our creeds." This is true! And what of that? We write our creeds

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to-day comprising the highest principles of action towards God and man that we can conceive of, we crystalize in our moral and religious beliefs the best thoughts, the noblest principles and truths of to-day. And let us have a prominent article of our faith that as human thought and experience develop new truth we may add to or modify our old articles of faith. Let us change, add to, and refine our creeds as we evolve into new lights and experience. When our creeds perfect us, then they may be considered as finalities.

There can be no valid objection to a statement of ascertained truths, any more than there can be valid objections to a knowledge of the best guiding principles of human action. Church creeds either are, or are imagined to be, pure concreted truths indicating our relations and duties toward God and man. We have been endowed with memory that we may lay up in our minds the fruit of human experience, and we have been given judgment or reason which enables us to discriminate in this record of experience. It is an error to either fail to write the creed of to-day, or to refrain from adding to it the newer truth which may be revealed to-morrow.

Let us search for the truth! Let us not cry aloud that we have it, unless we can furnish ample proofs of its genuineness. Let us not adulterate it with dogmatic opinions, and let us be careful not to mix with it much of faith and personal conviction which have chief value only in individual use. Truth should be demonstrated like a fact of science, something always admitted, never contested. A truth is never discordant with right reason. If it be a fact as I believe, universally admitted,

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that a creating Power exists, wise, kind, just and good, let us declare it.

Yet how careful should we be in our assumptions! The true searcher for truth is slow and hesitating, he is humble, patiently examining all things within the cognizance of his powers, listening dispassionately to others, honest and courteous toward the suggestions and opinions expressed by others, especially by those who like himself are earnest seekers for truth! We all acknowledge the value of truth. Let us mine for it; and may we, like the experienced miner, be able to distinguish the true from the "fool's gold" that we may secure only that which will bear the test of the furnace and show no loss.

We are justified in thinking that the human race is at the point of adolescence in regard to established truth. Science is at work quietly and modestly, and it is perhaps the most promising and hopeful child to which humanity has given birth! It is at work on material facts, or truths as reported by the senses, and this class of facts is the groundwork of all knowledge. Science is a child that has hardly yet begun to grope in the field of mental reflection or to make deductions from the material facts acquired through the senses. And it has little to answer to the questions we would ask concerning God and a future life.

No human being can form an adequate conception of the power, wisdom and goodness of God. If our minds are weighted, as we must all admit is possible, with any degree of the ignorance and superstition bequeathed to us by our honest

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forefathers, how willing we should all be to revise and re-examine the grounds of our faith and guiding principles of action in religious matters! In case of such re-examination if we find that we have the "truth and the whole truth" there will be no need of change. And an honest examination of our creeds of faith and morals would only strengthen our conviction that we were in the right path.

I would not have a religious society attach merit to belief, nor demerit to unbelief; for both may be honest states of the mind in regard to the truth or error of what is presented to it for decision. God has guaranteed to us in the mental constitution secrecy of thought, and our honest opinions and convictions, therefore, we may keep to ourselves. If, however, we feel ourselves inspired to express those opinions or convictions to our fellow-men, either verbally or in writing, then they may be considered as so presented to other minds that any one has a right to examine and criticise them fairly, to the end that truth may be evolved and established for the common use of all. And we may all felicitate ourselves that we live in an age when free discussion in religion and morals is tolerated. This right of free speech has been wrested from the intolerance of past ages by the march of science and enlightened thought. We are beginning to realize and use our God-given right of soul-liberty to investigate and discover all of truth as best we may. May each Christian sect claim and maintain its right to differ as its honest convictions may incline it, from all other Christian sects. And may all those outside of any church organization claim and maintain entire freedom of

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thinking and of speech on these important questions of religion, on all suitable occasions. Clear convictions of the truth can only be arrived at by study of facts and by serious reflection, and when an individual claims to be convinced or to have real convictions it is not in order for another to question his results so far as they pertain to himself. There is great diversity of mind and thought; and this is well. The honest and true convictions of each and every thoughtful mind must be arrived at by and through its own mental labor. Our rule should be to adopt nothing which has not been passed through the analysis of the laboratory of our own minds!

Every man's convictions should be stamped by his own reason and best judgment and packed away in his memory ticketed with the reasons for his faith. But personal beliefs should have a basis of sound reason.

And all convictions supposed to be true, are likely to be modified; for in the evolution of thought there are no finalities. The data of science, philosophy and religion are constantly changing with the onward progress of the human mind.

No man can therefore conceive of any advance or amelioration in science, morals or religion that his own study has enabled him to make, which another man wiser and better than he may not improve upon! Each and every age is entitled to the advantage which the crop of its experience gives to it; and man in every age is entitled to the fresh thought which experience, reflection and science ripen into wisdom, as fruit is ripened by sunshine, showers and time.

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In the religious and moral duties the mental inspiration of the day and hour in which we live will suffice for the needs and demands of that day and hour. But the progressive changes of the human mind are and ought to be guarded and slow.

The religions of the world may be likened to a forest of beautiful and stately trees, around which have grown the briars and heavy underwood of superstition and prejudice. Our men of science, and our great religious pioneers, like Emerson, Parker and Channing, have done much to clear away the parasitic growth of noisome weeds and the clogging underbrush which ignorance has cherished around the roots of the great trees of religion. These pioneers need themselves to be watched, and must be guided by reason, by justice, and by patience, for they act as engineers and directors for a host of levelers and workers. The tall and grand old trees which represent our various types of religion may be left to grow; their tap-roots run down deeply in the soil of human needs and sentiments; but we should prune away those limbs of superstitious errors that prevent the sunlight of truth from penetrating to cheer our minds and hearts. Let us not attempt to destroy these trees of human faith! Let us trim and beautify them, and when they gradually decay they will be replaced by newer and more beautiful growths for future generations.

Our creed should be made up of true principles of right thinking and right conduct, and I see no objection to noting down in the form of constitutional principles, or a creed of beliefs, the honest convictions of to-day by those who would

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form a Religious Society. Why cannot all stand on a platform of the truest and noblest principles that the head and heart can conceive of in our day and generation? We may do this and yet admit that there is nothing now conceived in science, morals and religion which may not in time be improved upon. With this conviction I express the hope that should those who believe in "proving all things and holding fast that which is good" accept the suggestions I have made toward a codified statement of principles, and found a Society upon them, they will candidly submit them to the tests of their own reason at all times. And I would urge that in case of the acceptance of these, or any other statements of belief by a Religious Society worshipping in Bell St. Chapel, there may be at the end of every five or ten years a convocation or convention held by all the members of such Society, the object of which shall be the careful review, criticism, and if necessary, change of the adopted creed.

There is no danger that such a course would lead to any unseemly haste in changing accepted theories, for in evolving from error to truth all changes are slow and ought to be.

In my opinion the system of Religion and Morality I have tried to present, embraces the truest conceptions of our real relations to God and to each other that have been promulgated up to this time upon the earth. But as time advances, and as our race grows in intelligence and manly sincerity, as scientific facts are more fully learned, we shall have material for deductions and decisions much more accurate than these. And then some amendments and additions to the little code of principles

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of religion and morality here presented will be needed, for we should hesitate to affirm finalities in regard even to the most rational of the accepted truths of the hour in which we live.

Therefore in view of the mental progress made by experience and mental reflection, which must have a tendency to refine and perfect the human mind, I deem it very important that at least as often as once in ten years a Religious Society should meet in a *convocation for the revision of accepted creeds*, such as I have recommended to those who may form a Society of the Bell St. Chapel.

In such a Society we want the strength of belief and faith which the older forms of religious organization exercise toward their tenets. We want also the charity and fraternal feeling which the purest members of those organizations exercise toward each other. And we want the utmost freedom consistent with unity, and a constant outlook toward future growth.

And in order to establish harmony of sentiment and unity of aims in such a Society, no one should be admitted as a member who is not guided by rational principles or who does not manifest a certain degree of intelligence.

And no one could properly become a member of such a Society who did not perceive and acknowledge the existence of some Power higher than the human mind, to which is attributable the sustaining of the laws of nature, either by direct power or through agencies.

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ON THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

I believe in establishing Sunday Schools. I would embrace in the teaching of such schools the whole duty of man; religious, moral and political; and also such teaching as would tend toward success in life in pecuniary matters. I would teach children to do unto others as they would feel it right for others in like circumstances to do unto them. And I would also teach them to rely as much as possible on themselves, and not on others for their material well-being in this world.

I believe that for the maintenance of a useful religious school for the instruction of children, there must be by the parent society, under whose auspices the school is established, some organization on definite principles, on acknowledged codified articles of belief. And I believe that the negative unbelievers should believe *something*, and teach what they believe to their children. When the Committee of the Free Religious Society of Providence called upon me to ascertain if I would give them the use of my Chapel for a Sunday School, my first question was, "What do you propose to

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teach?" This question seemed to be a poser and remains still unanswered. Hence I was obliged to decline their request. As to pupils who are learning from intelligent lecturers I willingly gave the Free Religious Society the use of the vestry of the Chapel. But I have always been unwilling to use the audience-room until it can be dedicated to some positive principles of religion and morality. And I could not give the use of any part of the Chapel for a Sunday School unless I could know what was intended to be taught therein.

The endowments of a higher power of reason and the accumulations of experience may, like material property, be handed down to our posterity. By this means the race of mankind gradually approximates toward perfection. But to make this march toward perfection sure and steady, we must each and all of us seek first to educate and perfect ourselves, in order that we may transmit to our children and to posterity the accumulation of truths and principles we have ourselves gathered. And we must also simultaneously with our own progress, make our children partakers of our moral and religious acquisitions as we go along. The constant interchange of ideas of right and wrong must take place among old and young.

It is necessary for our growth that the best guiding principles of religion and morality should be fixed in our minds. And to this end it is necessary that we study and reflect upon them, repeating them in various forms of expression but trying always to convey the essence of the principles by which we should be governed. Especially is this course of frequent

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repetitions of accepted truths necessary in regard to the education of children. Parents should feel bound to bring up their children in such manner as will ensure not only their own well-being in this world, but also that of all who may be connected with them in close relations of life hereafter; and they should be taught an ever widening interest in mankind until they can say, as did that noble man, Thomas Paine, "The world is my country; my countrymen are all mankind."

The most effective method of sustaining any system of thought or religion is organization, which includes the teaching of children by all parents and teachers what is esteemed by them to be the truth. I believe that the truths and deductions of reason taught to children should be advanced by the teacher in a spirit of humility and deference to the possibility and even probability of a future gradual change in the human mind which will modify present conceptions. The parent and teacher are bound to give the child what seem to them the most advanced and the truest thoughts of the age. The child has a claim upon the parent and teacher for this, and nothing more can be given sincerely. And the pupil has a right to inquire of his teacher by what evidence he has arrived at the results he seeks to impart. Truth, wherever it actually exists, is the product of facts; and that teacher is to be condemned who seeks to inspire a faith in any statement which he cannot or will not attempt to justify by the facts and evidences which have affected his own mind.

The following dialogue represents how a lesson in Sunday School might be conducted.

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ON THE PATERNAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

Instructor: "The Power above all human power is eminently paternal. The laws of nature are unchangeable in their operation, and were instituted to be in harmony not only with man, but with all living creatures, and with the highest development of this world and of the whole universe, so far as the knowledge of man extends."

Pupil: "Is there responsibility in the laws themselves?"

Instructor: "There is no responsibility nor substantiality in the laws themselves; any more than there is responsibility in your five senses which are the blind instruments to serve your mind, which resides in the dark chamber of your skull. So man was not made for the laws of nature, but the laws of nature, as manifested in this world, exist to subserve the well-being of man and of every living thing. And these laws of nature may be called "the modes of motion" of the *mind* behind them. We judge of God's character by His manifestations through these laws. God is invisible to mankind. No man ever saw the mentality or spirit of nature; we only perceive the effects of this mentality. And it is equally true that no man ever saw the mentality existing in the dark chamber of a human skull. All mind is invisible to our senses, but we perceive the character and intents of mind, both in man and in nature at large, from the effects of its manifestations. We

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perceive God's wisdom and goodness as we do that of a human being through his acts.

Pupil: "It is very pleasant to live in this beautiful world. Please tell me how it is that I exist?"

Instructor: "I believe that you and all of us have come into existence by the will and power of that mind or influence we call 'God.'"

Pupil: "Is God kind and good?"

Instructor: "God is the source of all kindness and the fountain from which proceeds everything that is good."

Pupil: "My mother and father and others are very kind to me; but no one of them is the God you speak of."

Instructor: "No, my child, but the spirit of kindness which animates each and all of them is the spirit of God Himself which is manifested through them. When your dear mother smiles and caresses you it is really God that smiles. His kindness is manifested through your father and your mother and all others who treat you gently and are good to you."

Pupil: "Then must I only love God, since from him proceeds all goodness?" I do not see Him, where is He?"

Instructor: "God is visible, in and through your parents and your friends, and you must love and respect God through them. It is God's intent that you should love your father and mother and friends, and in loving them you love God, since they represent Him."

Pupil: "How wonderful and beautiful is everything I see in this world! How good God must be to give me loving friends."

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Instructor: "Through God comes all your blessing."

Pupil: "My milk is from the cow, my bread is made from wheat grown by the farmer, my fruits are from the orchard; To whom am I indebted for these things?"

Instructor: "All these gifts come from God for He is the great furnisher of all good through His Divine agencies; He is sometimes called the 'Providence of Nature.' Kind parents present to their children healthful and delicious fruits. But let us not forget that first of all we owe to the Divine Father the original kind conception of these delicacies created to the end of our enjoyment and well-being. Truly God is behind all our blessings and entitled to our highest love and gratitude! Parents are only God's authorized loving agents to act for Him!"

Let us all be grateful to God!

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BELL STREET CHAPEL.

The writer has built a Chapel in Bell St., Providence, which up to this time has never been dedicated, but which he hopes soon may be and in the name of guiding principles of religion essentially modified from those prevailing among the religious sectarians of our day. His honest conviction is that the views he wishes to have presented in this Chapel are an advance toward a juster appreciation of our relations with the Divine Power than those now popular. He feels that he is actuated by pure motives in seeking to present these advanced views to the intelligent consideration of the public. He does not in the least impugn the sincerity of faith and conviction of those from whom he differs. He realizes that the holding and propagating what he believes to be great errors in religious opinion has not prevented millions of such persons from leading purest lives full of love and charity.

The writer hopes that the edifice he has erected may be consecrated to the study of the character of the Power above humanity whom we name "God," whose existence the writer acknowledges with a sense of gratitude and a sincere desire to ascertain our true relations to this great Being. He hopes that in this Chapel may be studied God's manifested will and

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intents in this world to the end that these may be furthered, in the spirit of humility and gratitude, to the full extent of our liberty and power. A sincere voluntary head and heart worship is now proposed as the true religion of the present and the future, and the only return in man's power to make to the wise and beneficent Being to whom he owes existence and all the happiness and possibilities of happiness that life comprises.

The writer respectfully submits to those who may be interested in the religious movement of Bell St. Chapel the following formula of convictions; they being, as he believes, a rational advance upon the popular creeds and beliefs of Christendom, and tending to elevate our conception of the character and true dignity of God, as also to elevate man himself in his own estimation to the true dignity which is his birthright.

This formula is to the writer's mind, an attempt to explain the true relations between God and humanity; comprising a statement of the highest motives which should influence mankind to lead moral and religious lives. And he asks pardon if in this, as in other matters, his convictions have led him to express his ideas in too affirmative a manner.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES PROPOSED AS THE BASIS OF A NEW RELIGIOUS SOCIETY.

We believe in the existence of a Power other and immeasurably higher than the human, whose character, as manifested by the phenomena of nature and human life, is wise and good.

We believe that while the human mind is not constituted to comprehend a beginning of things, we may comprehend the character of a living and sustaining Power working through unchanging laws to the end of the well-being and happiness of every organized being on this earth from man downward.

We believe that mind exists always associated with matter, and that all organized existences are each in their several grades constituted with powers of mind which enable them easily and happily to perform the activities which properly appertain to their grade or sphere of life.

We believe that to man is given large measure of liberty, so that he is enabled acting individually and collectively to create circumstances, to be virtuous or vicious, and that to this endowment of liberty or free-will is attached responsibility for the effects of his action whether those effects be good or evil.

We believe that man is subject to the operation of unchangeable laws of God, which, founded in wisdom and goodness,

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man has no power to modify or change. And we believe the intelligent man is wise enough to perceive that these laws of God are in harmony with his own well-being and happiness.

We believe that all things are related to one another, and that man is related nearly to God as to a Divine Father. And a study of the relations of all organized existences to each other, and of all creatures to God, has given us the conviction that God greatly considers and cares for all that he has created.

We believe that our relations to God being of this filial character demand of us a recognition of His existence, and acknowledgment of our gratitude to Him for His gifts to us.

Recognizing the fact of our own existence in nature, we would assume as a starting point of religious faith, justified by reason, the existence of a wise and good God, the Giver of life.

Recognizing it for truth that relations exist between us and this Higher Power, between each individual and his family and his neighbor, his community, his country and the world of mankind, and recognizing that these relations involve activities for the effects of which we are responsible whether they be good or evil, we would assert our determination to be guided by the highest rules of action toward God and toward our fellow-man.

Recognizing that the highest well-being of all demands of each a pure, just and honorable life, we deem it for our best interests to unite in the formation of a Religious Society for coöperation in the extension of knowledge and virtue.

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And in so doing we desire to assert, and pledge ourselves to be guided by such articles of faith and belief as in the present stage of the development of reason and experience we believe are the best which can be known and followed.

And believing that the statement and exercise of the highest known principles of a given age, is the way to bring about natural evolution toward a higher state of morals and better conceptions of religious duty, we would be honest in our expressions of convictions of right, and earnest in guiding by them our own actions. To further these ends we would consecrate a temple to God, to Truth, and to all that dignifies and ennobles Humanity.

We define Religion to be the voluntary performance of all duties growing out of our relations with God.

We define Morality to be the performance of all known duties growing out of our relations with each other.

We desire to form a Society to show by facts and truths the real relations of man to a higher Power, to name and explain the nature of all religious duties growing out of these relations with God, and to persistently advocate, through a permanent organization, the constant performance of these duties.

And we would also, through the same Society, show the true moral relations of man with his fellow creatures, name and explain the varied duties which grow out of these relations, and persistently teach that the performance of these duties will result in the increased happiness and well-being of the human family.

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And whereas God in giving us dominion for our use and pleasure over innocent and defenceless animals, has confided in our justice and consideration toward them that they shall be treated kindly and in accordance with their comfort and well-being, to act thus toward all lower animals is a positive duty, growing out of our relations with God, as well as with these animals, since to treat them unkindly would be to prove ourselves unworthy of the confidence God has placed in us.

We believe in the divine influence of intelligence and nobility of mind, and of the unselfish emotions of the heart, wherever found, whether in man, or in higher or lower grades of existence.

We believe that the great and noble Mind and Heart of the universe above the human, whether acting as one single Power, or as many Powers, or through agencies, has given life to man and to all grades of existence free from onerous conditions which it would be hard and painful to fulfil.

And we believe that the acme of man's privilege is the enjoyment of ever living nearer to God; and we *would* live nearer to Him.

As a Society we would aim at nothing less than the perfection of the human race in physical, mental and moral well-being. And we believe that man, possessed of liberty within the bounds of the laws of nature, has the power to perfect himself.

As a Society we should have no desire to diminish in any sect the religious sentiment or devotional spirit; far otherwise! We should aim to increase and purify this spirit of devotion

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by presenting a truer object of inspiration, and by giving sound reasons for the cultivation of the religious sentiment.

Being endowed with reason, with a natural sense of justice, with moral consciousness which enables us to distinguish between good and evil, we can know and appreciate our own character and that of others. And this same basis of judgment we must depend upon in estimating the character of the Power above the human. No "persistent force," no mere *power*, would justify our homage and worship. There must be a high moral quality to justly win our adoration; and no teachings of any religion justify us in worshipping a God inferior in moral traits to the highest human character. Hence we would use our perception and appreciation of the best in man and woman as the revelation and faint type of the perfections of God.

Let us found a society of earnest and honest Truth-seekers, adopting a religion so simple, so reasonable, and so in harmony with the dignity of both God and man, that all can exercise and share in it! On the simple and great principles of acknowledgment of the existence of God and gratitude to Him, and devotion to duty, we trust that the devotees of every existing religion may harmoniously unite.

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Father of all! With humility and with hearts filled with gratitude, we should bow before Thee who art our friend behind all other friends. While we exercise the precious privilege of being virtuous and intelligent we have no fear of the benign laws of Nature which are instituted in wisdom and kindness. Man only do we need to fear; who endowed with freedom to be virtuous or vicious, and given reason and experience to guide him, yet often becomes unjust and cruel toward his fellow-man. Although in his freedom man may thus become an author of evil, yet by no special Providence dost Thou interfere in human affairs: that injustice is never committed by Thee.

We thank Thee for our existence and for all the joys of life. And above all we thank Thee for the precious privilege

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which it is possible for all to enjoy of having Thy Divine Indwelling Spirit in our minds and hearts.

Heavenly Father! May we seek with a sincere heart, and all the intelligence we can command, to know Thee as Thou art. We know that all of goodness, all of intelligence, that men possess individually or collectively, are but as drops from the ocean of goodness and intelligence which form Thy character. Our opportunities and our capabilities enable us to become worthy to be called Thy children, and to be feeble types of Thee. We believe that a real knowledge of Thy character enables us to cast out fear of Thee from our hearts. And we believe that in all the varied races of mankind he who looks up to Thee for approval, with sincere endeavor and honest intent to know and do the right, feels within Thy approving smile, which is not denied to the ignorant of the earth.

Heavenly Father, while it is not given to our finite minds to comprehend a beginning of life, yet we feel assured that we, and every living creature, are constantly sustained in life by Thy wisdom and kindness.

INVOCATION TO THE SUPREME.

Father of All, who continually workest for good, in humble acknowledgment I thank Thee for life, and all the good that life comprises. By no principle of justice known among men had I any claim to existence, yet Thou hast given me life and a glorious liberty of action. Thou hast given me parents and kindred. These I love, as they love me; but behind all

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objects of human affection I find Thee, the fount of all tenderness, and the kind Author of human love. The only return I can make to Thee for the blessings of life is to consecrate to Thee the deepest gratitude of my heart, and to further Thy kind intent toward me by enjoying fully and rationally all the happiness comprised in Thy precious gift of life.

INVOCATION.

Divine Father! Since dust has no claim to be organized into human life, but is indebted to Thy wisdom, power and love for its organization into a happy consciousness; so, be our human life short or long, having no claim to any duration of it, we should recognize Thy goodness and be grateful to Thee for the much or little Thou givest us of this precious human existence. Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for life and for all the happiness and well-being that life may comprise.

INVOCATION.

Father of All, if in Thy wisdom Thou hast deemed it fittest that Thy personality should be invisible to man, yet Thy character of wisdom, beneficence and love is as visible as the Sun! And if that Sun is not Thy central residence, and the great reservoir of Thy mind and heart, we may be permitted to believe that in its glorious effulgence and beneficent influence upon the earth, it fitly symbolizes Thee to our minds. Thou art indeed to us the Sun! Flooding our souls with rays of universal benevolence!

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INVOCATION ON LIBERTY.

Divine Father, we thank Thee for existence and the dignity conferred upon mankind by the power of liberty in thinking and acting for ourselves, which enables us to lead virtuous lives, and to enjoy the beneficial effects resulting therefrom. By study and reflection we may increase our intelligence, and by humble imitation of Thy character we may become good and in every way charitable towards those who require the exercise of these virtues. We acknowledge and thank Thee for the precious gift of our freedom even if it leads us into the paths of error, whose effects are mentally and physically painful to us. We thank Thee for the kindly reformatory consequences which Thou hast annexed to error, carelessness, and crime, for these without annihilating our sense of freedom and liberty, lead us back to a closer observance of Thy divine laws, which Thou hast instituted in wisdom and love to the end of the perfection of human happiness in all our relations with Thee and in our relations with our fellow creatures.

INVOCATION.

Divine Father, we feel it to be a high duty and privilege to meet together and voluntarily and gratefully acknowledge Thee as the source of all intelligence and goodness! Yet we ought also to feel, judging from thy character of concreted love and disinterestedness revealed to us by Thy manifested laws, that still more acceptable to Thee than such recognition of Thy wisdom and love, would be our united efforts to make

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men good and happy. Far more acceptable to Thee would it be for us each and all to use our natural freedom and liberty to the full extent of our power to increase the sum of human happiness. For by so doing we should raise human nature to its true dignity, and become thy co-workers in all that is good in this beautiful world, which is especially given to man as his sphere to improve!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Divine Father. We recognize Thy existence by Thy countless manifestations visible in nature and in ourselves! Thy wise and loving character is shown by and through all phenomena. God of all nature! No human mind can conceive of the height and breadth of Thy power, of the vastness of Thy intelligence, or of the depth of Thy great heart of goodness! Divine Father, we do know that all life on this earth is indebted to Thee for its existence; that through the intelligent power and kind influence of Thy Divine mind the laws of nature came into being; and we do know that Thou hast created us with minds to comprehend Thy natural laws and with wills to conform our lives to their commands. We do know that our happiness and well-being in this world depend upon our obedience to these laws; we know that our minds and our lives should be governed by the divine principles Thou hast instituted for our guidance; that we should be just, kind and fraternal in all our relations with our fellow-creatures. We also know that we should cultivate our own

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minds, and honestly and earnestly give to the young the results of our searching after truth, to the end that they may more easily learn their true relations with Thee and with all creatures.

Divine Father, while we humbly acknowledge that no human being can fathom the depth of Thy wisdom, Thy power, Thy noble disinterestedness and Thy love, yet we may feel assured that since Thou art behind all of good in our lives, Thy love for each and all of us is not less than that of a kind father to his offspring, or Thy affection less intense than that of a mother toward her child! Though Thou requirest of Thy dependent creatures no homage, no gratitude, no faith in thy existence even; though Thou makest no demand nor hath need of any return from us; yet, since Thou hast dignified and ennobled humanity with freedom of action, we, using this high privilege, would, meeting in the house dedicated to Thee, acknowledge with deep and sincere gratitude and love our indebtedness to Thee. And we would acknowledge that it is our duty, as it is our greatest honor, to co-operate with Thee to the extent of our power in making our own lives and those of our fellow-creatures better and happier.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Heavenly Father! By virtue of the liberty and intelligence with which we are endowed we claim relationship with Thee, we claim to be Thy children, since our creation is the highest conception of Thy divine mind. We are conscious that we

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have the power to perfect ourselves, to render ourselves faint types of Thee, to commune in our minds with Thy mind, and thus place ourselves in harmony with Thee and with each other! Divine Father, we thank Thee for the gifts of reason and judgment, for the sense of justice by which we are enabled to perceive Thy true character and learn our relations with Thee and with our fellow-creatures. We thank Thee for memory, which garners our experiences and activities as time advances, for our instruction. Divine Father, we thank Thee that while in all ages peculiar joys have been given to the discoverers of truth in all things, yet Thy smile, typified by a good conscience, has never been withheld from those who though cherishing error sincerely believe and act in accordance with the best they know. Power Supreme, we acknowledge that it is our duty to Thee and to ourselves to advance our own well-being in this world. Using the mind, and freedom of action, of which we find ourselves in possession, we should try to search out truth, to ascertain our true relations with Thee and to each other, that we may grow ever toward perfection.

We have nothing to ask of Thee, nothing to beg, nothing to pray for; Thou hast already given us all that is necessary for our well-being in this beautiful world. Thou hast given us the inestimable boon of freedom to walk in the paths of goodness or to follow the ways of evil. We live under Thy wise and beneficent laws, with power to make our social laws harmonize with them, to the end of human well-being. Kind Father, we gladly accept this freedom and the responsibility

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which Thou hast linked with it. By it we are distinguished from the lower animals and become masters of the world. Infinite in dignity, power, and goodness, Thou dost with benignity look upon any ingratitude of man towards Thee, for comprehending all things, Thou knowest that such ingratitude springs from man's ignorance and his want of perception of Thy character.

Divine Father, we would be enabled to perceive and to gratefully acknowledge that life has value to us even in its less fortunate conditions. And in all trouble and anxiety Thou hast given us the companionship of *hope* to cheer and sustain us. We believe that Thou hast confided to man the achievement of his own perfection in happiness and well-being. We believe that Thou hast given us all that we need in intelligence and in power of activity to accomplish this task. Father of All, Thy gifts are abundant and precious; and we have the privilege of knowing and obeying Thy laws.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Kind Father! having no claim to existence, Thou hast given us conscious life, the grand gift in which is comprised all of well-being and happiness we enjoy from Birth to Death! Divine Father! we thank Thee for all the joys we experience from the dawn of our existence to the present hour! We owe to Thee the love of our mothers, who are the favored representatives of Thy own tender and considerate care for us! We thank Thee for the pure innocence of childhood, and the emotions of love and affection that spring up in the minds

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and hearts of children towards their parents, their sisters, and their brothers, thus unifying in families Thy kind love and affection for all mankind! We thank Thee for the buoyant hopes welling up in our minds, which like Thy smiles of encouragement accompany us through life in all our worthy pursuits. Divine Father! whilst in the nobility of Thy great mind and heart Thou requirest of us no homage, no worship, yet we thank Thee that we are permitted of our own free will, voluntarily, to consecrate to Thee our purest gratitude and love, as to our first, last and best friend on earth. And when at last the beautiful drama of life closes upon each of us in our turn, when by the wise fiat of Thy law, the curtain falls and shuts from our sight all of life, may our last thoughts be those of gratitude and thankfulness for our existence, whether our life be long, or short. And may we die full of faith and trust, that having freely and kindly given us the great blessing of Life, Thou wilt not make Death, coming from Thy wise and beneficent hand, a great misfortune.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

O God! Though we have no claim to life, Thou hast through Thy wise and beneficent laws permitted our existence! Thou gavest us parents, delegating them to act for Thee in all their loving care for us. Thou hast given us infancy, youth, and mature age with all their varied joys and happy experiences! To Thee first of all we owe our purest love and deepest heart-felt gratitude, since Thou art our first true friend and benefactor! Thou art the Author of the natural ties that bind us

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to existence; Thou art behind parents, brothers, sisters and near and dear relations and friends. Thou art the Source of all our blessings and enjoyments in this world; so should we all obey Thy laws, study Thy Will, and through our power of freedom to act, should we coöperate with Thee in the fulfilment of all Thy beneficent intent.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Heavenly Father! I thank Thee for the gift of life and all the happiness and possibilities of happiness that life implies. All Thy natural laws are instituted in wisdom and kindness to the end that all mankind and all living creatures may in their sphere be happy. With existence Thou hast endowed us with liberty of thought and action, free from onerous conditions towards Thyself, that might deduct from life its value. No system of worship, no belief in creeds, no acknowledgments, no gratitude even, is demanded or required by Thee, of Thy poor dependent children. No prayers, no servility, no adulation from man can change Thy Will as wisely and kindly expressed through Thy laws of nature.

Heavenly Father, wisdom, disinterestedness, and benevolence are concreted in Thy character; and we may, altho Thou dost not demand it, of our own free will humbly approach Thee and offer voluntarily our tribute of love and gratitude for the gift of life and all its attendant blessings. This we may do without fear that our omission to do so, will bring from Thee condemnation and punishment, and without expectation that by so doing we shall receive any reward

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other than a consciousness of doing all that we can do, be it ever so little, by way of return for all Thou hast bestowed upon us. We acknowledge, Kind Father, that to perform our highest duties in life is to exercise our highest privileges, and the highest happiness man can realize is the consciousness of performing his duties in his relations with Thee, and in all his relations with his fellow creatures.

LIBERTY AND DUTY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Heavenly Father! With all the strength of our minds, and with grateful hearts, we humbly acknowledge Thee as the source of all good. Thou hast given us this vast planet as our inheritance. Thou hast endowed us with Liberty, which next to life is the greatest boon of existence, a gift which elevates man above all other existences on this globe. As Thy power and will are infinite, so is the power and will of man finite and limited. With man's liberty of action Thou hast wisely and kindly given him the natural activities of his nature. Thou hast endowed him with senses, with mental perceptions and powers of reasoning, by which he may comprehend his true relations with Thee. Thou dost enable him to comprehend also his duties in all his relations with his fellow creatures; those duties the conscientious observance of which will promote the individual and collective happiness of all mankind.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR LIBERTY.

Divine Father! we thank Thee that in the constitution of our minds, so admirably varied in powers, Thou hast

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endowed them with the quality and power of Liberty! Under the reign of Thy infinite power, and under the natural laws by which all of creation is sustained and governed, we are endowed with that degree of freedom which permits us to honor and dignify human nature, by coöperating with Thee in our humble way, to further Thy wise and beneficent aims and intents in Thy relations with this world. Heavenly Father! we thank Thee for the completeness of this freedom, that permits us to take upon ourselves all the responsibilities and consequences of opposing even in a degree Thy will and Divine intents in our behalf! We thank Thee, and acknowledge that the exercise of this great gift of Liberty has placed us in the scale of being above all other animals in this world! Our natural freedom raises and dignifies us in our own eyes and in Thy estimation, when we use Thy great gift of liberty in the furtherance of all good, and in opposition to all evil in this world! We thank Thee, kind Father, that we are not humbled and made of no account in our own estimation by any special interference on Thy part with human liberty, and the affairs of our race, other than by guiding principles and laws of nature, established in Thy wisdom and goodness, to the end of sustaining in existence all things! We also thank Thee, kind Father, for the limitations of human liberty, in our power of creating and perpetuating evil in this world! Thou hast permitted to exist in our minds the clear perception of what is good and what is evil, with liberty and power to avoid the evil and choose the good, and we thank Thee, that Thou hast kindly attached good consequences to virtuous

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conduct, and evil consequences to vicious conduct! So should we gratefully acknowledge the priceless gift of human Liberty with the dignity which it confers! By its best use, we can assimilate our nature in a degree to Thy divine character, and by its misuse and abuse, we create in our individual and collective action all the evil which exists in this world, and from which we are justly suffering the consequences. Kind Father! we acknowledge with grateful hearts that there is nothing we can reasonably ask of Thee, since Thou hast already bestowed upon us the power, the liberty and the faculties under Thy divine laws, to provide for ourselves all that we need for our happiness and content. And especially do we thank Thee for the privilege which the boon of liberty confers, of exercising towards Thee the purest and deepest gratitude of our hearts. Thou, with Thy great beneficent heart and intelligent mind, art the cause of our existence, and behind all the happiness we enjoy in this beautiful world. And we would ever be grateful to Thee.

CONSECRATION OF A CHILD.

Divine Father! We would gratefully acknowledge that having no claim to existence, through Thy power and goodness we exist. Thou art behind all of goodness, intelligence, and well-being that we enjoy. All are born of Thee, and in ushering us into this beautiful world, Thou hast provided all that is needed for our welfare. The mother in her tender care and love for her offspring acts as Thy honored agent, for Thou hast constituted her loving nature to represent Thy

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love and will. The smile of the infant upon its mother, is Thy smile of encouragement given through the infant, infusing into her mind the joy that mothers feel in the well-being of their children. The father, constituted with greater strength of body, is better fitted to work in rough places than the mother; so he is permitted to find his happiness by coöperating in laboring cheerfully for the welfare of his cherished family, which Thou hast kindly confided to his care.

Heavenly Father! Thou hast attached no unreasonable conditions to the precious gift of life! Of all Thy gifts to mankind, that of Freedom of Will is the greatest, and the one which dignifies man above all other living creatures in this world. We gratefully accept this precious Freedom, with all its attendant responsibilities and consequences; this freedom of thought, leading to honest convictions of duty, is the birthright given by Thee to every child born into the world. And we should not seek to restrain our children's freedom of thought when time and reflection mature their ability to think for themselves. And now, Kind Father, we voluntarily bind ourselves to the exercise of our own best intelligence to educate and advance the happiness of this child whom Thou hast confided to our care and affection. We know that we shall feel Thy smile of approbation in our consciences even if we, sincerely striving after truth, should fail to find in its education the perfect way; for Thou judgest all of us, by the best intentions of the mind and heart. Amen.

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PRAYER.

We would humbly and gratefully acknowledge to Thee, Father of all, that Thou hast given us all things necessary for our happiness and well-being. In Thy far-reaching wisdom and kindness Thou hast given mankind the sovereignty of this beautiful world. We have the power to master the wild forces of Nature; and by obedience to the unchangeable laws which Thou hast instituted we, as individuals, as communities and as nations, can place ourselves in harmony with Nature and live nearer to Thee.

We acknowledge our responsibility, and that in violating Thy laws we justly entail upon ourselves the evils we may suffer; and we acknowledge also that it is our duty to organize to learn and honestly teach the truth. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

O Thou great and beneficent Power, whose presence is seen and felt in all around us and in ourselves, we have nothing but humble acknowledgments to make to Thee for the gift of life, with its manifold blessings. We can make no return to Thee, we have nothing to offer Thee, but our grateful hearts and a determination to further Thine intents and purposes as they shall become manifest to our minds. To obey the laws which Thou hast instituted and thus place ourselves in harmony with Thee and with Nature, is our highest privilege and our highest duty. Kind Father, we have nothing to ask of Thee! Thou hast already given us every means by which to perfect our happiness in this world. As humble recipients of Thy bounty, therefore, we would with grateful hearts pay homage to Thy power and unfailing Goodness. Amen.

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NOTE.

The following passages were culled from manuscript not discovered until after the main body of the book was in the hands of the printer.

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A MANLY PLEDGE IN REGARD TO WOMAN.

By the memory of my mother, whom God appointed my loving guardian through infancy, and who loved me through life, I solemnly promise that I will never do harm to any woman. The mental and physical constitution of woman in many ways superior to that of man, makes her naturally dependent upon him in some respects, and leads her naturally to confide in him; and I hereby pledge my honor never to cheat or deceive a woman in any way, but to do all in my power to prevent her being cheated or deceived by others. By the love and respect I bear my mother, my sister, my wife, and my daughter, I will endeavor to keep this sacred promise made before God and these witnesses.

NON-SECTARIAN TEACHING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

In our Public Schools, where the children of various denominations are sent, no peculiar views of morality and religion taught by any particular sect should be permitted to predominate. For by favoring the views of one sect the teacher would unjustly ignore those of other sects, and all have equal rights. What then of morality and religion may be taught in

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our Public Schools, with justice to all? Only those principles of truth and right which are common to all sects and religions.

ON TAXATION OF CHURCHES.

In regard to churches being exempted from taxation, it seems to me that religious as well as moral principles should decide each member of every religious sect not only to submit to taxation but to insist upon it; and for these reasons:—

The different religious sects in a given city vary in their tenets. And each holds its own articles of belief to be right and those of the other sects wrong. And each regrets that the others should propagate erroneous and pernicious doctrines. The "Orthodox" condemn the "Unitarians" and the "Universalists," and they in turn denounce the former; and the Catholics condemn all other sects of Christendom. Each and all sects are right in adopting sincerely what they believe to be the truth; and it is their sacred duty to oppose by all lawful methods the propagation of what they believe to be error. Now, as the taxes are paid by all in the community, each sect, if its churches are exempt from taxation, is supported by enforced contributions from those of other faiths. And any one who could not with a clear conscience contribute voluntarily for the support of religious views he did not profess should not be compelled to do so involuntarily by a public tax. Each and every member of any church pays, as a citizen, his proportion to make up for the tax-deficit caused by the exemption from taxation of all church property. And if the principles of justice were observed, and he were not compelled in this way to help

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support churches whose doctrines he did not believe in, it would cost him but a little more than it does now to support the church of his own faith, and pay the tax which would then be levied upon it. All offerings in the way of churches and their support should be free and voluntary on the part of religious societies. Otherwise an unwilling tribute is accepted from outsiders who belong to no church, and from outsiders who belong to other churches and who often feel that only their own form of belief is right.

GRATITUDE TO GOD.

Our gratitude to God is proven by our disinterested courtesy, justice and reasonable kindness to each other. Since God is manifested in others, as in ourselves and in all living creatures, we may come face to face with the great Power that animates all Nature. And reason may be likened to a spark of the intelligence of God Himself.

GOD WITH US.

Man has no need to go back two thousand years to find God. He is here with us in our own age. He is *living*, and abides with us every day and every moment, as in the past and forever-more. When are we nearest to God? We can appreciate Him best at the present time; the hour in which we are living. Nor need we go afar off to find God, for He is manifested in our own minds and hearts. Although it may be true that He resides in the heavens, in the planets and suns of

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the universe, yet each and all of us may know Him as we know a father, a mother or a friend.

EACH SHARES WITH ALL.

No man can be happy without imparting a share of happiness to others: no man can be miserable without reflecting a portion of his misery upon others. Hence, let us cultivate happiness and root out misery, as we would a poisonous weed, from the world! And as a fond parent is delighted with the indications of intelligence in his child, so we may imagine God to be pleased with man's gradual advancement in the sciences, in the arts and in all things which contribute to our well-being and happiness!

PICTURES IN A CHURCH.

Representations of fruits and flowers for example, hung where they may be easily seen, remind us of the goodness and kindness of the Supreme Power who like a loving parent has created and provided them especially for mankind. As we are grateful to each other for gifts received, and place them in prominence, and make grateful acknowledgments, so should we place in prominence the gifts of God. With this thought we hang these fruit and flower representations to incite the feeling of gratitude that ought to fill every mind.

GOD, GRATITUDE, OBEDIENCE.

A true religion, such as I think we should all be guided by, and such as I propose and hope to have taught in the

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chapel I have erected, rests upon three fundamental principles, as follows :—

First: An humble acknowledgment of the existence of an intelligent and beneficent Power superior to humanity, which we call God.

Second: In acknowledging that life and all its blessings flow from this beneficent Power, we must acknowledge also that God is entitled to our highest gratitude.

Third: Being only humble, but still grateful recipients of God's bounty, our obedience to his laws, which were instituted in wisdom to be obeyed, is the return we should make for all benefits received; and by such obedience we conform ourselves to God's will and further His intents.

These I claim to be the three fundamental principles of a religion which will embrace all our duties to God, to each other, to society and to the world.

On the platform of these three great principles, — God, Gratitude and Obedience, — it seems to me that we can all stand.

THE USE OF SUNDAY.

As respects Sunday, I believe in setting apart one day in seven for the purpose of assembling and acknowledging in an appropriate manner our indebtedness to God for life and its enjoyments, for instruction on moral and religious subjects, and to listen to sincere and intelligent teachers of science and of enlightened thought; — all this, — with music and poetry in harmony with our sentiments and feelings, ought to make our Sunday gatherings most dear and interesting to us all.

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TRUE WORSHIP.

As to Prayer in such assemblies, we should avoid all forms antagonistic to reason and such as a reflecting person could not participate in. What should we think of the mental capacity of a child who should pertinaciously go to his father every morning and beg for the water, bread, clothing and other things he should require for that day? Before the father's patience was exhausted he might say, "My son, all these things are provided for you daily; your continued asking for them betokens great blindness or little faith." God is the Father of us all, and supplies us with the means of obtaining all things necessary for us more fully than the parent supplies voluntarily the wants of his child. Hence we may pray to and beg from each other with much more propriety than we can appeal to God for such gifts. But I claim that we can replace the ordinary forms of prayer by something better. I see no impropriety in a person rising with becoming reverence and solemnity, and uttering in fit language an address of thanksgiving to the God who is actually present in the humanity assembled. With voice and instruments of music, with tender emotion and grateful hearts, let us sing and recite of God's goodness in giving us life and its manifold enjoyments!

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THE FOLLOWING

"AXIOMATIC STATEMENTS"

ARE LETTERED UPON THE PANELS OF THE DOORS LEADING FROM THE OUTER HALL INTO THE MAIN AUDIENCE-ROOM AND VESTRY OF BELL STREET CHAPEL.

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LET US DO OUR
DUTY
TO
GOD
FROM
A
PRINCIPLE
OF
HONOR
BECAUSE
IT IS
RIGHT.

LET US
VINDICATE
THE WAYS OF
GOD
TO
MAN.
GOD
IS
NOT
RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE
CRIMES
OF
HUMANITY.

NOT
FROM FEAR
OF
PUNISHMENT
OR HOPE OF
REWARD.

IT IS
POSSIBLE
FOR
MAN
TO ERADICATE
ERROR
AND
CRIME.

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PRAISE
AND
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
NOT
PRAYER.
LET US NOT SAY
GIVE US!
BUT
RATHER
THOU HAST
GIVEN US!

FEAR NOT
DEATH!
THE SAME WISE
AND
BENEFICENT
POWER
THAT GAVE YOU
LIFE
PRESIDES EQUALLY
AT YOUR
DEATH.
TRUST IN GOD!

MAN
BEING FREE AND
SOVEREIGN
CREATES
CIRCUMSTANCES
AND IS
RESPONSIBLE
FOR
ERROR AND CRIME.

THE INFANT
SMILES NOT
UPON ITS MOTHER
BUT
GOD SMILES
THROUGH
THE INFANT.

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WE
BELIEVE IN
GOD
IN
HUMILITY
IN
GRATITUDE
AND
OBEDIENCE
TO HIS
LAWS.

LET US
CONSECRATE
A
TEMPLE
TO
GOD
TO
TRUTH
AND
HUMANITY.

MIND
MATTER
AND
GOD
ARE CO-EXISTENT
AND
CO-ETERNAL.

THE
INTELLIGENT
AND
GOOD
LIVE NEAR
TO
GOD.

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INVOLUTION
BEFORE
EVOLUTION
A THINKING POWER
HIGHER AND NOBLER
THAN
HUMANITY
EXISTS
BEHIND
ALL
AND
THROUGH
ALL.

THE
PERFORMANCE
OF OUR
HIGHEST
DUTIES
IS OUR
HIGHEST
PRIVILEGE.
GIVE US
A TRUE AND MANLY
RELIGION
THAT COVERS THE
WHOLE FIELD OF
DUTY
TO
GOD
AND
HUMANITY.

LET US
CHERISH
THE
COURTESIES
AND
AMENITIES
OF
LIFE.

GIVEN A FAIR
AND EQUAL CHANCE
THE GRASS OF
TRUTH
WILL CUT OUT THE
WEEDS
OF
ERROR.

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MANY
CHRISTIAN
BELIEFS
OF
TO-DAY
WILL
BECOME
THE
REJECTED
HEATHENISMS
OF THE
FUTURE.

NO
SACRIFICE
OR
WORSHIP
CAN BE
ACCEPTABLE
TO
GOD
THAT DOES NOT
PROMOTE
THE
HAPPINESS
OF
MANKIND.

ORGANIZED
ERROR
IS MORE POWERFUL
THAN
UNORGANIZED
TRUTH.

BE
GRATEFUL
TO AND
TRUSTFUL
IN
GOD.

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